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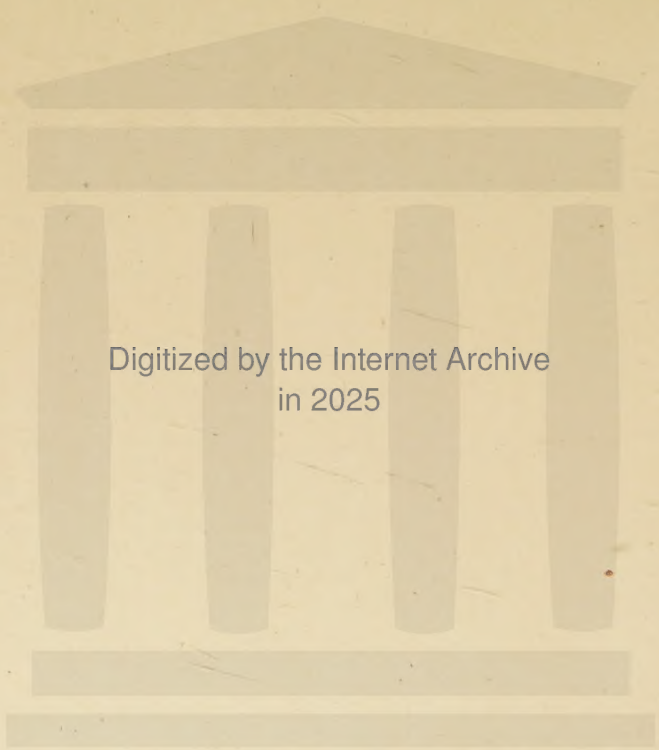
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THE PREACHER'S COMPLETE HOMILETIC COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

THE PREACHER'S COMPLETE HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON THE

OLD TESTAMENT

ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN

WITH CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES, INDEXES, ETC., ETC.

By VARIOUS AUTHORS

In Twenty-One Volumes

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
NEW YORK AND LONDON

A HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON THE BOOK OF

JEREMIAH

CONTAINING

EXEGESIS

Supply Expository Notes to each Chapter on *Chronology, Contemporaneous History, National Affairs, Geography, Manners and Customs, Literary Criticisms,* Etc.

HOMILETICS

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Furnishing Side-lights on the Homiletic Themes

BY THE

REV. W. H. JELLIE

Author of "Crowds of the Bible," etc.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

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PREFACE.

MANY of the choicest hours of the past five years have been devoted to the production of this Homiletic Commentary on Jeremiah.

Judging from the surprisingly few sermons or outlines on texts in Jeremiah *with which our search through homiletic literature for aid in compiling this volume was rewarded, it would seem that this inspired book has been to most preachers an untraversed, or at best an unfrequented, path. Owing to this notable scarcity of material, the task of preparing this Commentary has been proportionately greater; for there has been but slight opportunity, in this respect, "to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand"* (2 Cor. x. 16).

Notwithstanding this paucity of resources, this volume will be found to contain, in brief or fuller form, about eight hundred and fifty outlines for sermons. And, that it may be understood to what extent this Commentary is a creation rather than a compilation of homilies on Jeremiah, *it may be added, that of these eight hundred and fifty outlines, it has been our personal part of the labour to construct no fewer than four hundred and seventy homiletic plans upon texts in* Jeremiah, *which appear, so far as literature affords evidence, to have been hitherto left by preachers unused.*

Thus, in addition to nearly five hundred original outlines, this volume contains over three hundred which have either been condensed from printed sermons by renowned preachers, or supplied by ministers whose aid was sought in order to bring variety into the "Commentary." The sources of help include the Rev. Andrew Fuller, Dr. Chalmers, James Sherman, C. H. Spurgeon, T. B. Power, M.A., W. Hay M. H. Aitken, Robert Hall, W. H. Murray M'Cheyne, Samuel Martin, J. Kennedy, M.A., D.D., Bishop Reginald Heber, Dean Alford, Dr. Jabez Burns, Charles Simeon, M.A., Dr. Guthrie, "A. K. H. B.," John Foster, Archbishop Tillotson, Payson, T. Gordon, B.D., Dr. South, Job Orton, D.D., Edward Dorr Griffin, D.D., Henry Ward Beecher, Stephen H. Tyng, De Witt Talmage, President Davies, Albert Barnes, S. Baker, D.D., E. Jarman, W. Whale, S. Thodey, J. Farren, W. Forsyth, Matthew Henry, Hannam's "Pulpit Assistant," "The Homilist," Brooks' "Plans," and Origen's "Homilies." Where no name is found at the foot of an outline, it indicates that the work is original.

Reference to the Comments, which are interwoven with the outlines, will show that the most apt and helpful suggestions which English and foreign scholarship has afforded respecting the meaning of verses have been intro-

duced; and the source of the comment, if borrowed, is in all cases acknowledged.

It may be hoped, without immodesty, that many a student and preacher may find encouragement and stimulus from this "Commentary" to preach more freely from themes in this suggestive and admonitory "book of prophecy;" for, indeed, many of the messages of Jeremiah—faithful, pensive, rousing—are scarcely less suited to our age than to his own.

In the production of the volume one hope and aim has ruled—that every text in Jeremiah on which it seemed possible that a sermon could be based should be forced to give up its richest meaning and most practical hints; so that no preacher shall turn to the homilies in this "Commentary" for help on any verse in Jeremiah without finding here valuable aids to thought and sermon preparation.

The Critical and Exegetical Notes heading the chapters are intended to supply all needful information for the satisfactory exposition, during public reading, of each chapter. The Sectional treatment of whole paragraphs may help to a broader survey of the main themes contained in each prophetic message than can be gained by isolating every verse. The Homilies and Outlines on successive verses will offer hints for sermons on every single text which appeared to hold a homiletic theme. The Noticeable Topics which follow this verse-by-verse treatment of each chapter supply more lengthened outlines on texts of special significance. The Addenda Section to each chapter supplies "Illustrations and Suggestive Extracts" likely to be useful in illuminating or enforcing texts to which they apply.

The threefold index will render reference to any topic prompt and easy.

In sending out this volume to fellow-workers in the broad fields of Christian ministry and Scripture-teaching, the prayer is in our heart that the Divine "Lord of His servants" may condescend to use even this product of our patient studies as one channel along which to answer the cry addressed at times by all wearied or perplexed workers to Him:—

"Lord, give me light to do Thy work,
For only, Lord, from Thee
Can come the light by which these eyes
The work of Truth can see."

HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON

JEREMIAH.

INTRODUCTORY.

I.

PERSONAL CAREER OF THE PROPHET.

I. Parentage and calling. Hilkiah, his father, was a priest of the house of Ithamar (*Keil*), (1 Kings ii. 26), of Phinehas (*Wordsworth*), (1 Chron. vi. 13), residing in the sacerdotal city Anathoth (now called Anata), situate within easy distance of Jerusalem, "about three Roman miles north" (*Jerome*).

(*a.*) *His birth* was an incident of great domestic joy (xx. 15). (*b.*) *Called* to the prophetic office, according to Lange and Bishop Wordsworth, B.C. 627; Keil and Dr. William Smith use the more recently established chronology, and give the date as B.C. 629; but the "Speaker's Commentary" points out that the discovery of the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions bearing upon the Assyrian period of Jewish history shows an entirely altered series of dates, which fix the year of Jeremiah's call, "the thirteenth of Josiah," as B.C. 608. (*c.*) *Quite young when designated* to his sacred work, "a child" (Jer. i. 6). (*d.*) His *mission* was defined as both destructive and constructive (i. 10); should be devoted to Judah yet extend to other nations. (*e.*) He was *located* at Jerusalem (ii. 2), yet travelled through the provinces (xi. 6), and frequented his native town in fulfilment of his prophetic ministry. (*f.*) His *work* was to follow up Josiah's outward national reformation by calling Judah to true repentance and renewal of heart and life. But the crisis in which he lived involved him in all the political tumults and disasters which gathered upon his nation.

II. Temperament and character. Instinctively tender and retiring, shrinking from public life and political prominence (ix. 2), keenly sensitive to misinterpretation and injustice, sympathetic with his nation's sorrows, affected even to suffering by the criminality he witnessed and denounced, yet, with a patriotism glowing and inflexible, clinging to his doomed nation and land to the last (xl. 4–6). So peaceful was his nature that antagonism dismayed him (xx. 8, 9); even at times inclining him to suppress the severer portions of his Divine message (xxvi. 2). Nevertheless, amid all the hardships and sufferings of his work, he became evermore unremitting in his diligence, unswerving in his fidelity, and intrepid in the discharge of his prophetic functions—alike before kings and nobles, priests and populace. "More of a John than a Peter."—*Lange.* "He was no second Elijah."—*Hengstenberg.* "The most sympathetic of the prophets."—*Gregory Nazianz.* "A kind of feminine tenderness and susceptibility."—*Maurice.* "But his weakness, timidity, and impatience belong to the earlier stage of his career. As his sufferings became more intense he received more grace, gained fresh courage, and derived inspiration from difficulty and danger"—*W*

III. Scenes of his prophetic work. Called to his office in the thirteenth year of Josiah, he immediately delivered his *first prophecy* in Jerusalem (ii. 2). In the eighteenth of Josiah the Book of the Law was found, and the king, eager for prophetic counsel, sent his state representatives to Huldah the prophetess. Jeremiah must therefore have been absent from Jerusalem, or he would have been sought; but as "the king's business required haste," and as Huldah was resident at Jerusalem, she was consulted. Yet Jeremiah was not far distant, for his *second prophecy* was now delivered before the assembly which the king summoned (2 Chron. xxxiv. 29). Most probably he *resided at Anathoth* during the first five years, retiring thither immediately he had uttered his first prophecy in the hearing of Jerusalem. Being near, he could quickly appear on the scene when the Book of the Law was found; and he then came with his second message (iii. 6). His naturally timid and retiring disposition might have rendered necessary that royal summons ere he would appear in Jerusalem again. For during that residence of five years at Anathoth he endured no little abuse and misjudgment from the "men of Anathoth" (xi. 21), making him reluctant, unless constrained, to resume his prophetic functions.

After these *five years at Anathoth*, he seems to have received God's command to travel through "the cities of Judah" (xi. 6), and, returning on his way through Anathoth, his townsmen, exasperated by his bold reproofs of their guilt, conspired against his life (xi. 21).

From this time he dwelt *in Jerusalem*, during a period of thirty-five or thirty-six years proclaiming the word of the Lord in *the temple* (xxvi. 1 *sq.*), in the *gates of the city* (xvii. 19), in *prison* (xxxii. 2), in the *king's house* (xxii. 1, xxxvii. 17), in the *potter's house* (xviii. 1), and the valley of Hinnom (xix. 2), until the Chaldean captivity led him away to Egypt.

In Egypt he spent the concluding years of his prophetic life.

IV. Treatment he received from his nation. For twenty-two years *during Josiah's reign*, and under his royal protection, his mission was free from special hardship, excepting the Anathoth antagonism. *Jehoahaz* seems to have allowed him to prophesy unopposed, but heeded him not. Throughout the eleven years of *Jehoiakim's* reign he was maltreated and imperilled (xxvi.) The next king, *Jehoiakin*, received his admonitory denunciations without resentment or molestation. Indignity and abuse reached their culmination under *Zedekiah*. With implacable hostility the princes and priests persecuted him (xxxviii. 4), and the king could not restrain them. He was imprisoned on a fictitious charge (xxxvii. 11 *sq.*), "endured all sorts of torments and tortures" (*Josephus*), nor regained his liberty during the entire period, eleven years, of Zedekiah's reign. Ultimately, it is believed, he fell a martyr at the hands of his own countrymen in Egypt.

V. Length of his official ministry.

a. It began *when he was very young*, "a child" (i. 6). The word נַעַר, "a boy," is used for *infant* (Exod. ii. 2), and also of *Joseph* when he was *seventeen years old* (comp. Gen. xxxvii. 2 with xli. 12). *Maurice* accepts the word as denoting "almost a child;" "young enough to make the most literal sense of the text reasonable." *Lange* suggests twenty years; *Thornley Smith* eighteen to twenty; *Bagster* fourteen, so also the *Rabbins*.

b. It continued among his people *before the Captivity for forty and a half years* (i. 2, 3); *i.e.*, under Josiah eighteen years, Jehoahaz three months, Jehoiakim eleven years, Jehoiakin three months, and Zedekiah eleven years.

c. It was *carried on in Egypt*, first at Tahpanhes (xliii. 8), and "ten years later Pathros (xliv. 1), in Upper Egypt, where, at a festival of the Moabitish goddess, Astarte, Jeremiah for the last time raised his prophetic voice in warning and rebuke."—*Lange*. It is certain that he lived some years in Egypt, till about B.C. 580 (*Dr. Smith*), 570 (*Lange*). His labours therefore must have extended over fifty years, thus showing that

d. His prophetic ministry was *prolonged till he was about* probably over

seventy years of age [Lange computes it as seventy-seven]. According to Jerome, Tertullian, and Pseudo-Epiphanius, he was stoned to death at Tahpanhes (*Daphne* of Egypt); and his sepulchre used to be pointed out near Cairo.

VI. Contemporaneous prophets. *Nahum* (*cir.* B.C. 625, onwards). *Zephaniah* "in the days of Josiah" (Zeph. i. 1; from B.C. 642–611). *Huldah*, also in Josiah's time (2 Kings xxii. 14). *Habakkuk*, probably about the twelfth or thirteenth year of Josiah (*cir.* B.C. 630, Dr. Smith: Lange suggests Jehoiakim's reign). *Daniel*, carried to Babylon "in the third year of Jehoiakim" (Dan. i. 1, B.C. 604). *Urijah*, during Jehoiakim's reign (B.C. 608–597), and slain by the king (Jer. xxvi. 20–23). *Ezekiel*, "in the fifth year of King Jehoiakin's captivity" (Ezek. i. 2; B.C. 595).

II.

STRUCTURE AND SCOPE OF HIS PROPHECIES.

I. Leading topics. (*a.*) *His prophetic programme* was simple; its central theme, the coming supremacy of the Chaldean nation: and this at a time when nothing was feared from Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar was unknown, when Egypt was ascendant and Pharaoh-necho the terror of Judah. He foretold the overthrow of the Jewish nation by this power from "the North;" defined the term of the Chaldean ascendancy and Judah's captivity, and predicted the emancipation of Judah and restoration of Jerusalem when the seventy years had expired. (*b.*) The *design* of his prophecies was threefold:

α. To *forewarn* the Jews of impending doom on account of national pollution and apostasy.

β. To *invite* them to repentance, promising immediate Divine forgiveness and ultimate redemption from Babylon.

γ. To *assure* the godly among them by predictions of Messiah's gracious advent, and the spiritual blessings incident to His reign.

II. Literary style. The book is an admixture of prosaic narrative of events, and poetic utterances of prophecy. While his style in the *narrative* parts may sometimes appear unpolished ["rusticior," *Jerome*], the *poetic* portions are often distinguished by an eloquence at once vigorous and sublime. His writings throughout are characterised by a reiteration of imagery and phrase, and a ruggedness of form natural to impassioned sorrow and indignant remonstrance. Though there are marks of "negligence in diction" (*Keil*), and while "not disregarding art altogether, he has far less polish than Isaiah" (*Lange*); yet "his thought is ever rich, and his speech incisive and clear" (*Keil*); whilst "of all the prophets his genius is the most poetical" (*Umbriet*).

III. Composition and compilation. His prophetic utterances were *first* committed to writing at the command of Jehovah "in the fourth year of Jehoiakim" (xxxvi. 1), for the purpose of their being read in the Temple by Baruch the scribe at the approaching national fast. The king, incensed by their contents, destroyed the roll. They were immediately rewritten; Jeremiah dictating them afresh to Baruch, with important additions (xxxvi. 32). *Other portions*, subsequent to this date (4th of Jehoiakim—11th of Zedekiah, over eighteen years) were written at different intervals in separate parts (xxx. 2, xxix. 1, li. 60). The *entire book*, therefore, includes the *roll written by Baruch*, the various *fragments penned by Jeremiah*, with subsequent *additions by the prophet*, either while he lingered in Palestine under Gedaliah, or while in Egypt among his exiled people. The complete prophecies would speak with accumulated emphasis to the heedless captives of the steadfastness of God's word and the consequences of disregarding His voice.

IV. Order and arrangement. (*a.*) *Chronologically* the book is in disorder and confusion: *e.g.*, xxi. and xxiv. 8–10, belong to Zedekiah's time, the latest king; while xxii. 11, 12, refer to Jehoahaz, the second king; and xxv. deals with Jehoiakim,

the third king. Distinct prophecies are mingled together regardless of date of delivery. (*b.*) *Topically*, there is arrangement: the book divides itself into two sections according to the *reference* of the prophecies. Thus, i. to xlv. relate to the prophet's own country; xlvi. to li. to foreign nations; while lii. is a historic account of the captivity appended after the whole book, i.–li., was put together, and the inscription, i. 1–3, written. This might have been the latest act of Jeremiah himself.

V. Genuineness and canonicity. (*a.*) The prophet's *individuality* is so impressed on his writings as to disarm suspicion of their authenticity. "His prophecies are his autobiography."—*Wordsworth.* The expression, attitude, and colouring of the whole book (*Ewald*) show the same author. [For critical comparison of the discrepancies between the LXX. and Hebrew text, see Keil, Lange, Henderson, and Dr. Smith.] (*b.*) The *canonicity* is vindicated by New Testatment allusions to Jeremiah and his writings (Matt. ii. 17, xvi. 14, Heb. viii. 8–12), and by the list of canonical books in Melito, Origen, Jerome, and the Talmud. Ecclesiasticus (xlix. 7) quotes Jer. i. 10, and Philo affirms that the prophet was an "oracle."

VI. Verification of the prophecies.

a. During Jeremiah's life, his predictions were fulfilled in—

(α) The captivity of Jehoiakin and his queen-mother (xxii. 24–26; *cf.* 2 Kings xxiv. 12).

(β) The death of Hananiah, the deceitful prophet, at the time foretold (xxviii. 15–17).

(γ) The inglorious end and shameful burial of Jehoiakim (xxii. 18, 19, xxxvi. 30).

(δ) The fate of Zedekiah (xxxii. 2, 3; *cf.* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19, and Jer. lii. 11).

(ε) The invasion of Judah by the king of Babylon, and Jewish captivity (xx. 4, &c.).

(ζ) The rifling of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar (xxvii. 19–22).

(η) The destruction of Jerusalem by fire (xxi. 10, xxxii. 29, xxxvii. 8–10).

(ι) The Chaldean subjugation of Egypt (xliii. 10–12, xliv. 29, 30); and supremacy over surrounding nations (xxvii. 1–8).

b. After the prophet's decease:

(α) The termination of the Babylonish captivity after seventy years (xxv. 11; see Dan. ix. 2).

(β) The return of the Jews to their own country (xxix. 10–14).

(γ) The downfall and desolation of Babylon, and date of the event (xxv. 12).

(δ) The advent of Messiah (xxiii. 3–8, xxxi. 31–34, xxxiii. 6–9, l. 4, 5).

Those prophecies, seen by exiled Judah fulfilled in their most literal form, effected a complete revolution in the esteem with which Jeremiah became cherished. His predictions of their deliverance and restoration, and his promises of Messiah, upheld their most patriotic and ardent hopes; and he, whom they had molested as the herald of their national doom, became revered as the evangel of their redemption. Legends gathered around his name investing him with an ideal glory. The Jews who returned from their captivity regarded him as "ὁ προφήτης," even in the sense and as the fulfilment of Deut. xviii. 18, and believed he would reappear as the forerunner of Messiah—a belief which survived the interval, and of which we have traces in New Testament times (Matt. xvi. 14; John i. 21, vi. 14, vii. 40).

CHAPTER I.

Critical and Exegetical Notes.—1. **Chronology.** Ver. 1–3, penned *circ.* B.C. 578; ver. 4, sq. B.C. 629. But the recently discovered Assyrian chronology would make the date of the "thirteenth of Josiah" to be B.C. 608.

2. **Cotemporary Scriptures.** 2 Kings xxii. 1, 2; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1–7. Books of Habakkuk and Zephaniah.

3. **Historic Facts.** Judah tributary to Assur-Banipal, king of Assyria; yet the kingdom at rest: for her *northern* foe, Assyria, had ceased invasions since Sennacherib's overthrow (2 Kings xix. 35, 36, B.C. 710); and her *southern* foe, Egypt, was engrossed and disabled from aggression by intestine wars. Josiah had reigned thirteen years; began religious reformation of Judah B.C. 634; was vigorously prosecuting it when Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry, B.C. 629 (or, according to Assyrian chronology, B.C. 608).

4. **Cotemporary History.** General outline: International ascendancy had been temporarily with *Assyria* (*circ.* 680–640) during the reigns of Esar-Haddon and Assur-Banipal: Saracus saw its overthrow. Judah was tributary to Assyria when Josiah reigned. During the thirty-one years of Saracus, Assyrian power was being undermined by the defection of its chief province, Babylonia, over which Nabopolassar was appointed governor by Saracus, and this at a time when Egypt was consolidating its power under Psammeticus (B.C. 664), and thus menacing Assyria. The *Median* empire was founded in the sixth year of Josiah's reign (B.C. 633), by Cyaxares, the Ahasuerus of Dan. ix. 1. Four years after Jeremiah began his mission (B.C. 625), Babylonia, under Nabopolassar, rose in revolt against Assyria, aided by Cyaxares with his Median forces, took Nineveh, and thereby overthrew the Assyrian domination, and with it the empire, on whose ruins rose the *Babylonian empire*, Nabopolassar its king. To him Judah's tributary dependence was now transferred. *Egypt*, under Psammeticus' successor, Pharaoh-Necho, then rose against Babylonia, and, by victorious war at Charchemish, claimed a short-lived international ascendancy. [Josiah succeeded by Jehoahaz.] This defeat was soon redressed by Nebuchadnezzar, son and successor to Nabopolassar, in a decisive conquest over Egypt at Charchemish, whereupon he became monarch of the all-powerful Chaldean dynasty. Judah, having been subject to Egypt, was then reduced to vassalage under Chaldean supremacy.

5. **Geographical References.** Ver. 1. "*Anathoth, in land of Benjamin*" (*cf.* 1 Chron. vi. 60). Situate on or near the great road from the north to Jerusalem (*Dr. Smith*); = Anâta, 1¼ hour distant N.N.E. of Jerusalem (*Robinson*). Remains existing of walls and strong foundations. "A poor village of only about twenty houses."—*Dr. Porter.* Ver. 15. "*Families of the kingdoms of the North;*" denoting the "numerous tribes or smaller nations of which the kingdoms forming the Babylonian empire were composed." This description is itself a prophecy of the compound elements, the admixture of petty nationalities, which would constitute the (then *non-existing*, but *destined* to become) ascendant Chaldean dynasty.

6. **Personal Allusions.** Ver. 1. "*Jeremiah,*" see Introduction, p. 1. "*Hilkiah,*" idem., also *Literary Criticisms* below. Ver. 2. "*Amon, king of Judah,*" son and successor of Manasseh, reigned two years, B.C. 642–640, killed in a conspiracy (2 Chron. xxxiii. 21–24). "*Josiah,*" a most religious king (2 Kings xxiii 25). Ascended throne in eighth year, awoke to religious life and divine claims in sixteenth year (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3, B.C. 634), commenced reformation of Judah in twentieth year (B.C. 630), restored Temple services, re-established worship of Jehovah, and cleansed the land of flagrant vice and idolatry. Book of the Law found during Temple restoration. Reigned thirty-one years; during the latter eighteen years Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem. Fell in war at Megiddo when resisting Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, in his advance upon Assyria (B.C. 610). Ewald conjectures that Psalm lix. was composed by Josiah during a siege of Jerusalem by Scythians. "*Jehoiakim*" (see *infra*), "He was an impious man, and impure in his course of life."—*Josephus.* The nation, fearing his despotic character, passed him by, and elected Josiah's second son, Jehoahaz, as king. But Pharaoh-Necho, returning after three months from Assyria (war at Charchemish), deposed Jehoahaz and enthroned Jehoiakim as dependent king. Reigned eleven years; slain by Nebuchadnezzar, the then all-conquering monarch of Chaldea (B.C. 599). "*Zedekiah*" (see *infra*) followed Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, he reigning only three months and ten days. He was the youngest son of Josiah, name Mattaniah; placed on throne by Nebuchadnezzar as his vassal, who named him Zedekiah. "A despiser of justice and duty."—*Josephus.* "Not so much bad at heart as weak in will."—*Dr. Smith.* In eleventh year of his reign, his Chaldean master ravaged Jerusalem, put out the king's eyes, and carried him, with the nation, into Babylonian captivity (B.C. 588).

7. **Natural History.** Ver. 11. "*Rod of an almond-tree.*" Luz (לוּז), the *wild* tree (Gen. xxx. 37); shaked (שָׁקֵד) the *cultivated*, here mentioned: so suggests Rosenmüller. Earliest tree to bloom; in *January* (*Kitto*). Resembles peach-tree in leaves and blossoms; bears white flower (allusion made in Eccles. xii. 5); and almonds, which "in the warm southern latitude mature in March" (*Paxton*).

8. **Manners and Customs.** Ver. 13. "*A seething pot,*" a large caldron used for cooking purposes (2 Kings iv. 38; Ezek. xxiv. 3–5). Ver. 15. "*Set his throne at the entering of the gate.*"

Inside the gates of Oriental cities wide covered streets or squares were and are found: these were—(*a.*) *places of concourse* (Neh. viii. 1); (*b.*) *of merchandise* (2 Kings vii. 1); (*c.*) *of judicial administration* (Deut. xvi. 18, xvii. 2, xxv. 7; Amos v. 10, 12, 15); (*d.*) *of royal judgment* (2 Sam. xix. 8, xv. 2); (*e.*) *of court councils* (1 Kings xxii. 10 *sq.*). Possessing the gate *implied dominion* (Gen. xx. 17; Isa. xxiv. 12). These words were literally fulfilled; see Jer. xxxix. 3. [Refer to "Land and Book," pp. 26–28.]

9. **Literary Criticisms.** Ver. 1–3. "*Words of Jeremiah*," &c. The title to the entire book; not merely to Baruch's roll, which ends with Jehoiakim's reign (ch. xxxvi. 12). Yet *Henderson* suggests Baruch's authorship. *Michaelis* thinks Jeremiah prefixed them to the whole collection of his prophecies ere he gave them to his captive countrymen to carry with them to Babylon. But *Lange* remarks that the book contains prophecies of later date than Zedekiah (ch. xl.–xliv.), and supposes Jeremiah *carried on the writing*, under Gedaliah, or in Egypt. Ver. 1. "*Hilkiah of the priests.*" Clement Alex., Jerome, Eichhorn, Umbriet, and others, think him the high priest of that name (2 Kings xxii. 4); but Henderson, Wordsworth, Keil, &c., object, for the *name was a common one;* and the high priest was limited to the line of Eleazar and the house Phineas, not Abiathar; and the high priest would *live at Jerusalem*, not Anathoth; moreover, he would have been "*designated* by the appellative הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל, the high priest, or at least הַכֹּהֵן, the priest, by way of eminence;" instead "of the priests at Anathoth." Yet Lange thinks "it is possible, but cannot be proved," he was Hilkiah who found the "Book of the Law," while the "Speaker's Commentary" affirms that beyond a doubt he was the high priest. Ver. 4. "*Then* the word;" rather *And* or *Now;* a conjunction, not adv. of time. Ver. 5. "*Sanctified* thee." *Henderson*, "*separated* from a common to special purpose;" *Keil*, "*consecrated;*" but Gesenius points to this passage as illustrating the Piel significance of קִדַּשׁ, "to *declare* any one *holy*." Ver. 6. "*I cannot speak, for I am a child.*" *Sharpe* translates, "I know not how to speak, for I am a youth." *Keil*, "I know not how to speak, for I am too young" (1 Kings iii. 7). The Rabbins understood by נַעַר a boy in his fourteenth year. Ver. 11. "*A rod of an almond-tree.*" Three interpretations of שָׁקֵד; for here is a noticeable paronomasia; "I see" שָׁקֵד; "Thou hast well seen, for I will שֹׁקֵד," &c. *Jerome*, "a *watchful* twig;" a twig whose eyes are open, whose buds have burst; denoting God would be "*watchful*" over His word; it should not fail. *Keil*, "a *wakeful* rod," suggestive of alacrity, haste; for God would *quickly* perform His word (E. V., "I will *hasten* my word," &c.). So also Henderson, rendering שָׁקֵד to be awake, vigilant; so called because the almond-tree *wakes earlier* than all other trees from the sleep of winter; meaning therefore "God's determination to execute with all promptitude His threatened judgments." Kimchi, Lange, Schmidt, and others, render the words "an almond-tree *staff;*" the reverse of leafy and blossoming; stripped, "a *threatening rod of castigation;*" urging that an instrument of chastisement is required by the context. "I see a wakeful rod; for I will be swift (alert) to strike." The event shall follow quick upon the prediction. Ver. 13. "Face *toward north.*" *Keil.* "it looketh hither *from the north;*" the direction whence would come the "evil;" and being "*blown*" (נָפוּחַ), will boil over, pouring its contents upon Judah. Among Arabs a steaming pot figures *war is preparing.* Ver. 14. "*Out of the north,*" &c. Not from *south*—viz., from Egypt, whence disaster was dreaded; but from Chaldea, which as yet showed no menace. All armies marching from the Euphrates towards Palestine entered the land *from the north;* thus explaining the geographical discrepancy; Chaldea being on the east, not north. Ver. 17. "*Be not dismayed, lest I dismay thee.*" Another paronomasia חָתַת, first in Niphil, then in Hiphil. "The Niphil signifies *broken in spirit by terror and anxiety;* the Hiphil, *to throw into terror and anguish.*"—*Keil.* If Jeremiah appeared before his adversaries in terror, then *he will have cause to be terrified for them.* *Sharpe* translates, "Be not affrighted at their faces, lest I affright thee before their faces," for the repetition of the verb חָתַת is followed in such case by פָּנִים, with prefix מִ *at* and לְ *to* or *before* respectively.

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES UPON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER I.

Section 1–3. God's messenger to rebellious Judah.
" 4–10. The prophet's call, consecration, and commission.
" 11–16. Premonitory visions.
" 17–19. Fearless performance of perilous service

Ver. 1–3. *Theme:* God's Messenger to Rebellious Judah.

Introduction. Jeremiah's ministry would prove *lengthy* and *chequered.* For forty years in Jerusalem he would sustain the arduous duties of his office, amid the successive reigns of five kings, under each of whom the nation sank to lower stages

of decrepitude and vassalage, until at length the ruthless Chaldean forces swept down upon the apostate and impenitent people, and wrought the captivity of Judah, the demolition of Jerusalem, and the desolation of the sacred land.

That so prolonged a period intervened illustrates the *Divine forbearance* (Ps. ciii. 8; 2 Pet. iii. 9); that God grants lengthened respite, and opportunity to repent and escape, ere He rises to punish. Through "so long a time" He spake unto them by His prophet, if so they would forsake transgression and turn aside the judgments impending.

Yet, however long the interval of respite, the *threatened calamities* will surely come (2 Pet. iii. 10); and they *came* "in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the carrying away Jerusalem captive" (ver. 3).

I. Godly parentage recognised and honoured. "Jeremiah, *son of Hilkiah of the priest*," &c.

Besides Jeremiah (and Nathan, 1 Kings iv. 5, *Tholuck*), the prophet Ezekiel (i. 3; *cf.* Josephus, Ant. x. 5, 1), and most probably Zechariah (i. 1, *Köhler*), were of sacerdotal origin.—*Lange.*

1. *Sacred ancestry Divinely selected.* Jeremiah was to be "sanctified" for God's services even "before birth" (ver. 5): it was appropriate that his parents should be holy to the Lord. So John the Baptist (Luke i. 13) and Timothy (2 Tim. i. 5). This messenger of Jehovah had existence in the Divine mind before he was conceived (ver. 4); and his birth into the world was an incident of Divine arrangement. God *appreciates, recognises*, and *honours* religious ancestry. *Samuel's dignity*, which so greatly honoured Hannah, the reward of her piety and prayers (1 Sam. i. 27, 28; ii. 1). *Solomon* also (1 Kings ii. 1–4 *sq.*); *Esther* (ii. 5–7, 17); and, in a special sense, *the Child Jesus* (Matt. i. 18, 23; Luke i. 28, 30). Godly parents are *not lost sight of by God*; and *their offspring* are objects of His special regard. (See Addenda, "*Parentage.*")

2. *The child's birth a home joy* (xx. 10): "Making him *very glad.*" Possibly the child was a gift *in answer to prayer*, and hence the great joy; as with Hannah. Surely his birth was *anticipated by prayer*, and *followed by dedication*, as an expression of gladness and *gratitude*. It was *unsuspecting* joy, for they knew not to what *eminent office*, and to what a *career of suffering*, their son was born. How is a child's life overshadowed by ignorance and mystery!

3. *Honour to the household through the child.* Hilkiah had been unknown to history and Christendom but for his son! Who would have heard of the widow *Anthusa* but for her son *Chrysostom*? Or of devout *Monica* but for her son *Augustine*? Or of the household of the *Wesleys* but for the boys John and Charles? A child may bring dignity and undying fame to his *family* and to his *birthplace*. For *Anathoth* is thereby raised from obscurity. As is Stratford-on-Avon and Olney, &c. The son may *take higher office* than his parents (*cf.* ver. 1, 5); "*prophet*" more than a "*priest.*" Loftier honour to stand and speak *for God among men* than to appear *for men* before God. *Hereditary* social status is not regarded by God (1 Sam. ii. 8).

II. Social seclusion invaded by Divine requirements. The messenger of God was born; in due time God would demand him. Boyhood spent in studious and reverent pursuits. His scriptural knowledge gained during those years; his prophecies show accurate acquaintance with the law. At length, to the quiet home at Anathoth, *God came*, to seek for Himself a prophet.

(*a.*) *God can seek out* whom He chooses; and (*b.*) *speak to* whom He selects: "To whom the word of the Lord came," &c. (ver. 2).

1. *A communication from God works wondrous changes in him who receives it* It wrought such changes—

a. In Jeremiah himself; a new creature that moment; no longer a mere Anathoth boy; awoke to a *new consciousness, new visions, new trusts.*

b. In his relation to others; belonged to Hilkiah before, *now to God;* had some

thing which was *not his own*, "word *of the Lord;*" not, therefore, to be kept for himself, not to be silenced; he must *speak what he had heard;* others must know (1 Sam. iii. 17; 1 John. i. 3).

c. In his life's worth and work. Until now he was nothing beyond his own home, now of worth to all Judah; his work had began, and it was a ministry for his nation. Communication from God implies commission for God (Acts iv. 18, 20).

2. *Our natural inclinations may not interfere with God's claims.* To Jeremiah *seclusion* and *irresponsibility* would have been far more congenial than *publicity*, with all its *hazards and solicitudes* (ix. 2); but God cannot be *restricted by our preferences*, nor determined by *our sense of aptitude and qualification* (ver. 6). If so, the "natural man" would dominate over spiritual laws and God's demands. Self must be subordinate when God calls. "Lord, I will follow Thee; but *let me first*," &c. Christ would hear of no evasions or inclinations.

3. *God's messengers cannot tarry in seclusion.* So Anathoth had to be left (ii. 2). There is an outside world which must *see* and *hear* those who love and serve the Lord. No *timidity* can justify seclusion; open witness for Christ is needed. The *times were evil* for Jeremiah, the *sufferings entailed severe;* but he boldly spoke for God (Acts iv. 29).

III. Speech for God the outcome of inspiration from God (ver. 1). "*The words of Jeremiah.*" Yet his first outcry was, "*I cannot speak*" (ver. 6). Nevertheless, we have in this book *speeches* enough to disprove his own plea. The explanation lies in ver. 2, "*To whom the word of the Lord came.*"

1. *Natural destitution of gifts, no disqualification for service.* He *found* "words" (ver. 1). See xx. 9. *Moses* (Exod. iv. 10). When *duty for God* presses upon us, *our insufficiency* falls out of the question. What ample assurance, what inexhaustible resources, what *provision against our own poverty*, dwell in 2 Cor. ix. 8.

2. *Human speech the channel of Divine communications.* "The *words* of *Jeremiah;*" yet they but expressed and conveyed "the word of the Lord." Angels brought the *Law* (Heb. ii. 2); but all God's *messages* have come through *human* speech; even "*The* WORD" (John i. 1–14) was made incarnate that MAN might speak to man (*cf.* Heb. i. 1, 2, ii. 3, 4).

3. *The personal characteristics of inspired messages.* Though it was "the *word of the Lord;*" these communications were "words of *Jeremiah;*" his personality, temperament, experiences, style of thought, modes of expression, are all stamped upon these Divine messages. Inspiration does not obliterate, scarcely subordinates individuality. Hence the graceful variety and naturalness of the Scriptures; their *humanness* as well as Divinity; and the manifold unity of the whole. God employs the *man*, his own true self, "*sanctifies*" him (ver. 5), "moves him by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21); but does not do violence to his natural gifts and qualities of character. In our work for Him whose we are, all our faculties are needed; Christ asks our every talent, our whole true self.

IV. God's messenger witnessing amid national convulsions and overthrows (ver. 2, 3). Jeremiah came to Judah at an eventful crisis and prophesied amid appalling events. But—

1. *His mission was originated to meet the crisis.* To *help Josiah* in his work of reformation; to *resist Jehoiakim* in his reckless impiety; to *remonstrate with Zedekiah* in his weakness and folly; and to show his *captive nation* their *sin* and their *Saviour*. God's servants are called to their mission at the right hour. He does not allow any age to be destitute of a messenger from Him. There may always be heard a voice for God, whatever the aspect of the times. Alas! (Isa. i. 3, 4).

2. *However circumstances may vary, God's prophet must do his work.* Friendly or hostile; Josiah king or Jehoiakim; when Judah is *reforming*, or *hastening back*

to abomination, whether men heed or oppose. Times of calamity afford special opportunities for God's voice to be heard. When kings fall, and foes are at the gates, and the kingdom is endangered, then God should be heeded. Judah was a *Theocracy*—God's nation; and with every epoch and change He sent directions, warnings, denunciations, promises, according to the hour. This is the work of every preacher, every Christian; to *address himself to the hour;* to make *God's Word heard* amid confusion, degeneracy, disobedience: to "warn the people," lest their blood be upon him.

3. *No calamity befalling man places him beyond the Divine message.* Josiah's death was an evil incident to Judah; the kingdom was doomed from that hour. But *God* remained, and He would have spoken hopefully to the bereft nation had they hearkened. Nevertheless, though they despised His Word, it came still to Jeremiah for Judah; when at peace, or amid war; before the Captivity and after; in their own land and in Egypt. Nothing befalls us but *God observes;* and He sends some "word" for us suited to the time. Wherever we are, amid *privileges* or *in exile* from all joys, still He sends messages of mercy and promise. Man is never beyond the *need* of God's message, nor beyond its *reach*, nor beyond the *consequences* which follow on reception or rejection; "life unto life" to the observant and obedient, but "death unto death" to those who will not heed the call to repentance and salvation. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

Ver. 4–10. *Theme:* THE PROPHET'S CALL, CONSECRATION, AND COMMISSION.

The Divine call involves—

I. *With respect to him who is called:*

a. The *duty*, to discharge the commission *without fear of man*, and without regard to *his own weakness.*

b. The *privilege*, being assured of *Divine protection and aid, and certain success in the work.*

II. *With respect to those to whom he is commissioned:*

a. The urgency of their believing obedience.

b. The certainty of the Divine message being fulfilled; no doubt of their realising the *threatenings* or *promises* addressed to them.

ZINDENDORF from *Lange.*

Call and consecration. The investiture of Jeremiah with the prophetic office is effected in four distinct acts:

I. *The call of Jehovah*, 4–8. This was not the product of a *reflective musing*, nor the result of an *inward impulse*, but a supernatural Divine revelation, an inspiration, a *voice from without.*

II. *His Divine consecration*, 9, 10. He felt the hand of the Lord touch him: "a palpable pledge of His support." Touching his mouth meant endowment. Equipment and qualification for God's work must be from God. "For the man God has chosen before his birth to a special office in His kingdom He equips with the gifts and graces needed for the exercise of his functions."

III. *Signs which unveil his mission.* These he "saw in spirit." God interpreted them to him as confirmatory tokens of his Divine commission; they are a surety of the Divine promise: (*a.*) Of the *speedy and certain fulfilment* of the word of God proclaimed by him; and (*b.*) *the contents of his preaching;* disaster and ruin which the North will pour out on Judah.

IV. *Supernatural assurances of help.* Jeremiah is charged to address himself stoutly to his duties, to discharge them fearlessly, and is assured of powerful Divine assistance. "Only by *unshaken confidence* in the power of the Word he preaches in the name of the Lord will he be able to accomplish anything." God will furnish strength, will make him valiant and impregnable.

Condensed and arranged from *Keil.*

Commission of the Prophet. In all cases it applies equally as with Jeremiah—

I. As to *the work in the vineyard of the Lord:*

1. It must be performed by men whom He *prepares* and *sends.*

2. It is a work both *difficult* and *dangerous.*

3. Yet it is rich in *successes* and rewards.

II. As to *the office to which the Lord appoints:*

1. It is for the purpose of accomplishing *His* will.

2. It needs the means which the Lord Himself provides.

NAEGELSBACH in *Lange.*

Provision for the Church.

I. The *Lord never allows His Church to lack the strength which time and place demand.* He does not seek this, or wait for it: He makes it (ver. 18).

II. *He chooses to Himself despised and inefficient agents for His service.* Now He selects one who to himself and to others appears too young; as elsewhere He chose what was foolish, weak, and base in the sight of the world (1 Cor. i. 19–29; Matt. xi. 25; John. vii. 48; James ii. 5). "It is not always the greybeard who is wanted."—*Förster.*

III. *When God gives office He give, also understanding.* (*a.*) It would be presumptuous to begin a great work in one's own strength. (*b.*) It is natural in view of a great and difficult task that one should be afraid. (*c.*) But it would be wrong if, from any pusillanimous *despondency or love of ease*, one should take no heed to an evident call of God.

IV. *It devolves upon God to protect the cause of His servant.* Since (*a.*) It is not our cause, but His; and (*b.*) we do not undertake it in our own strength, but in obedience to His command.

V. *To bear a Divine office ensures Divine succour.* When the office is *received* from the Lord, and is *conducted* according to His purpose and in His spirit, there the *Lord Himself* is present with weapons of defence and offence.

VI. *God's Word is mighty, however weak His messenger.*

a. It may be in the mouth of the humblest of His servants.

b. It is nevertheless a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces.

c. And no rock is too hard or high for it.

Arranged from NAEGELSBACH in *Lange.*

JEREMIAH'S MISSION.

Some saints have been consecrated from the womb. The Baptist was; Jeremiah was (ver. 5). The time came for calling Jeremiah out to his work (ver. 4, &c.). His age uncertain, but he was evidently in the morning of life God's call was clear, precise, peremptory Look—

I. At his objection, as here given. Not unreasonable; for his age—

1. Would indicate inexperience. 2. Insufficient knowledge. 3. Modest diffidence. Yet, 4. His age and defects time would remedy.

II. How God overrules his objection.

1. He refers to his pre-ordination. "Knew, sanctified, ordained" (ver. 5).

2. He refers to his commission. "Go to all that I shall," &c. (ver. 7).

3. He was to speak God's words. Did not require his own knowledge.

4. He pledged His Divine presence (ver. 8). Shield, help, deliverer.

5. Then there was supernatural communication (ver. 9).

III. Important lessons suggested.

1. God, and not man, arranges the affairs of His moral kingdom. He plans as to the work and the agency, &c.

2. God qualifies the instruments He employs.

3. God often selects His agents not as men would do. Men the mature, He the young; learned, illiterate; the respectable, the poor.

4. God gives His own message to His messengers. "My words."

5. The ministry of God's servants is mighty for good or evil (ver. 10). How great the results; portentous; solemn! Jonah, the Baptist, Jesus, the Apostles.

a. Let us listen when God speaks.

b. Obey when He commands.

c. Trust when He promises.

REV. J. BURNS, D.D., LL.D.

Ver. 11–16. *Theme:* PREMONITORY VISIONS.

Introduction. Jeremiah glides, almost imperceptibly to himself, from being a *hearer* into the office of a *seer.* He had listened only as yet (ver. 4–10), now he is asked to penetrate and gaze. It is a *preparatory* and initiative incident; his first

exertion of the prophetic faculty of seeing visions. God is thereby gently leading him on towards the prophetic office. Without realising that he is undergoing his first lesson, he passes through it. God allures him, surprises him, indeed, into the exercise of the perceptive powers needful for his mission; and He thus renders self-evident Jeremiah's aptitude for the work. So that when he answered the Divine inquiry, "What seest thou?" God could respond, "Thou hast *well seen;*" thus virtually saying to him, You already prove your power of spiritual discernment, your possession of the prophetic insight (Addenda to chap. i. 11).

In this cautious manner, dealing so *tenderly with Jeremiah's misgivings* and sense of inability, God leads him on. It is the second stage in the process of his induction. First he hears that he is selected to this mission. Now a proof is unwittingly supplied *by Jeremiah to himself* that God has not erred in entrusting him with the prophet's office; for he shows immediate ability to discern the symbolic force and teaching of things.

I. Truths pictured in symbols. "What seest thou?" And his eye rested on the blossoming bough of an almond-tree. "What seest thou?" And he perceived a boiling pot, whose contents ran over from the north. Each thing seen held a truth; and a truth which ran through all Jeremiah's after history and work.

1. *Helpfulness of objective signs.* Better for God to *show* Jeremiah these truths than to merely *say* them. Signs are *impressive;* they are *remembered;* they fix *their teaching* on the understanding.

The childlike temperament of man is always assumed by God; He teaches him *by pictures;* not tells him abstract truths. All Bible revelation is a series of pictures, an array of symbols which hold truths. We have very little direct teaching compared with picture-teaching in the Scriptures. All the Temple, its services and incidents, were symbols. All Christ's miracles were *truths acted out in incident;* parables in action.

2. *The eye an avenue of instruction.* When Pharaoh and the magicians *saw* Aaron's rod effect mightier results than their rods could work, they needed not a word to convince them of the supreme power of Aaron's God. It was convincing argument; the lesson was trenchant and decisive. Jeremiah never lost the *lessons of these visions;* he knew that *events would follow quickly upon his prediction* (ver. 12, "hasten"); and that *calamity would come upon Judah from the north* (ver. 14, 15). Our Lord knew the value of lessons *seen;* hence He continually appealed to His hearers to *look* at things around and heed their teaching: "*Behold* the fowls of the air," &c. (Matt. vi. 25). "*Behold* a sower," &c. (xiii. 3). "Behold my hands, and feel that it is I" (Luke xxiv. 39). This Divine plan with the prophets, and Christ's plan with His apostles and the multitudes, supplies the model for effectively teaching sacred truths.

3. *Hidden meaning in things.* The almond bough, the seething pot, were for signs; and Jeremiah saw their significance. Some persons see nothing; "have eyes but see not;" blind with a *blank literalism.* Everything is merely *what* it is. They have no imagination, no perceptive power, no spiritual vision.

> "The primrose on the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."—*Peter Bell.*

Yet, to *discerning* eyes, all things hold hidden truths, a Divine suggestiveness. The world is full of parables, in which sacred teachings are portrayed, and in which the enlightened soul perceives some counsel or promise from God.

To a few even *the Bible* is nothing more than a printed book, sealed and silent, with no revelation for them. "The veil is upon their heart." Yea, the gracious Jesus, "fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely," has to them "no beauty that they should desire Him."

This *barren materialism* closes the universe around a man like the grim walls of a prison.

"Two worlds are ours: 'tis only Sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within,
Plain as the sea and sky."

How different this from the thoughts breathed in Keble's hymn, "There is a book who runs may read!" so full of enlightened discernment of the sacred side of natural objects. If we see "the deep things of God," it is because of grace; and we have reason to say—

"Thou, who hast given me eyes to see
And love this sight so fair,
Give me a heart to find out Thee,
And read Thee everywhere.—*See Addenda* to chap. i., "*Visions.*"

II. The Prophet's initiation.

He was not ushered suddenly into the dazzling splendours of prophetic visions, making heaviest demands on spiritual insight; the first step was simple, the gradations gradual.

1. *The learner tested.* "*What* seest *thou?*" Exert your own perceptive powers; try how far they will carry you towards truth. It is wise to educe a learner's powers. So Jeremiah looked out *first upon nature.* Would he see anything? Among all the arboreous growths, would *anything suggestive* strike him? Trees were all black in winter's death; no fertility, no vitality; barrenness, somnolence everywhere! But lo! *one solitary twig* among the trees *bears blossom;* it is an *early fulfilment of God's word,* which pledged the spring: he calls it "*the wakeful tree,*" quick to bloom, *hastening into activity* with earliest dawn of spring. And God commended his vision, for he had "seen *well,*" or aright.

He then turns towards the *habitations of men:* activity is everywhere; on the open hearth steams the caldron; many things are happening which would engross the idle gazer; does anything *stand out specially* on Jeremiah's vision? One object arrests him, and he sees that only, all else is excluded; it has a significance to his mind—a *pot boiling over in a certain direction.* He observes every minute particular. It makes evident his faculty of suggestive discernment.

There stands a *Cross* on Calvary. Men pass by. "It is nothing to them;" but "*What* seest *thou?*" All depends on your discernment. Is it merely a symbol of *suffering,* or of *salvation?*

2. *Progressive stages of instruction.* The first vision was easier far than the second. The almond bough was the only living thing within his gaze. Noticeable, therefore, by contrast with surrounding death; *readily discernible.* Having passed that test, the second demand comes. This "seething pot" was only one of many noticeable things; not conspicuous; it required more effort on his part to detect the *suggestive object.*

But more. The *truth taught by the sign* was harder to bear. The first simply taught that God would *early perform His word;* the second indicated *mixed elements* in the pot, *boiling over,* with its face from the north, meaning that *mingled nations* which would constitute the *Northern* scourge, which would *overflow* its boundaries and *pour calamities* on Judah. Thus our Lord gave to His disciples teachings "as they were able to bear" them, holding back the weightier truths till they had learned the simpler.

God has more to show us of Divine purposes, more great and marvellous truths; but He leads on as we are fitted to discern them. The Israelites under Sinai heard once God's voice, then entreated that it might never speak again; but *Moses,* who, reverently regarded, went up to the heights, saw visions of resplendent glory, and talked face to face with God. Our *power to receive visions* is the only limit to larger revelations.

3. *Personal preparation.* The visions Jeremiah would eventually behold would be full of awfulness and dark with threatenings. God showed him an *outline* first, that he might be prepared to meet the wider portrayal of things to come.

His mind *received the germ of* truth, and he had been *exercised in prophetic perception.* His eyes had now been Divinely opened. He most conclusively showed his *aptitude for sacred communications.* He could "see well." This aptitude was not at first manifest; but the visions had taught him his qualifications and mission. He was to be a *seer*, a "prophet." It is, then, right to remark that, *If God calls us to use powers* in His service which *we do not think we possess*, (*a.*) Be assured that we have them: (*b.*) He will teach us to use them: (*c.*) They will be sufficient for our work: (*d.*) They will grow into vigour by further use. Reflections:

1. God never errs in calling us to service for Him; He will qualify us.

2. Cultivate a discerning eye of signs God puts before us.

3. Simplest things may hold sublime teachings. Christ's parables were simple, but they contained truths of eternal value to the world.

III. The messages taught by the visions. 1. *That his prophetic word would be followed quickly by the event* (ver. 12). Some prophecies pointed to distant years; but these were nigh. Therefore *his mission was urgent;* the judgments gathered thick and fast. Comp. *Jonah*, his preaching to Nineveh. Analogy: Our testimony of the nearing hour of death; the "accepted time" hastening away; the Spirit grieved, ready to depart. "*To-day*, if ye will hear His voice," &c.

2. *That an unexpected foe was gathering his forces for their destruction.* They dreaded Egypt; but the Chaldean dynasty would soon gather together the "families of the kingdoms," and become a scourge to Judah.

a. Where we *look not* for calamity it may come (ver. 14).

b. God prepares retribution for transgressors (ver. 15).

c. Apostasy from Him cannot go unpunished (ver. 16). (See Addenda to chap. i., "*Out of the North.*")

Such was the prophet's announcement! The *Gospel* admonitions and denunciations are equally appalling. May they who hear them "flee from the wrath to come." For in Christ "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 7).

Ver. 17–19. *Theme:* FEARLESS PERFORMANCE OF PERILOUS SERVICE.

Jehovah's "charge" to His servant.

Paul's charge to Timothy is emphatic and vigorous (2 Tim. iv. 1–5), pointing out the hazards and difficulties of his ministry, the forms of hostility which would assail his word, and encouraging him to assurance, diligence, and fidelity.

But this is a charge from the Almighty God Himself to His prophet, who had shown much *reluctance* and *trembling.* (See Addenda to ch. i., "*I cannot speak.*")

I. *Attitude must be valiant*, ver. 17.

1. Not craven: "Stand," or "arise."

2. Not apologetic: "Speak."

3. Not awed by men: "Be not dismayed."

4. Not forgetful Whom you serve: "Lest I confound thee."

II. *Strength shall be invincible*, ver. 18.

1. God had made him impregnable: "*I* make thee," &c.

2. His work would be "against" all ranks of the people.

3. He would be assailed, as a "defenced city" is besieged, ver. 19. "Fight against thee."

III. *Hostility would be impotent.*

An "iron pillar" which could not be overthrown; "brazen walls" which fire could not consume.

Judah would be overthrown, and *Jerusalem* burned; but not God's prophet: for

1. A Divine *promise* of safety is given: "They shall not prevail."

2. The Divine *Presence* would be around him: "For I am with thee."

3. The Divine *Power* would be exerted for him: "To deliver thee."

A prophet's work.

I. *The Divinely-called prophet becomes a sacrifice and instrument for God.*

1. He regards only God's will and command.

2. Must do and proclaim what the Lord bids him do and preach.

3. Must expose himself to consequent hostility.

4. Must meet antagonism with fearlessness of man and faith in God.

II. *The wrong and results of sin must be proclaimed to all, heedless of their station,* ver. 18.

1. The anger of God against sin will certainly overtake them.

2. The preacher must set forth these facts: sin, and God's consequent displeasure.

3. This must be declared to the whole people: "All the land."

4. Equally before governors as subjects; the high as well as the low.

III. *A teacher, in view of gross corruption, must not proceed softly.*

1. Vigorously overthrowing wrong, ver. 10.

2. Having by the Law destroyed the kingdom of Satan in the hearts of men;

3. He must seek to "build up" the kingdom of Christ therein by the Gospel.

IV. *Resentment may be the only return men make for faithful work for God.*

1. Kings and subjects equally hate a reprover.

2. Sense of its justice makes reproof more exasperating.

3. Yet God's witness must fearlessly tell the whole truth.

4. In courageous service God will protect His messenger.

Enlarged and evolved from
STARKE in *Lange.*

Servants of God.

I. *Their duty.*

a. Always to have their loins girded, ver. 17.

b. To proclaim without fear of man whatever the Lord commands.

II. *Their privilege.*

a. Mighty through the power of God.

b. Unyielding to any power on earth.

III. *The Lord's requirements of His servants.*

a. To be always ready for His service: "Gird loins."

b. To accomplish what is bidden without delay: "Arise and speak."

IV. *The Lord's promise to His servants.*

a. That He will be with them.

b. That no earthly power shall conquer them.

NAEGELSBACH, in *Lange.*

God's witness.

I. *He must be quick:* "Arise," and lose no time.

II. *He must be busy:* "Speak unto them," in season, out of season.

III. *He must be bold:* "Be not dismayed."

IV. *He must be faithful;* for

1. He must speak *all* that he is *charged with.* Forget nothing, conceal nothing.

2. He must speak *to all* that he is *charged against.*

a. Because he has reason to fear the *wrath of God if he should be false.*

b. Because he has *no* reason to fear the *wrath of man* if he is *faithful.*

MATTHEW HENRY.

HOMILETIC TREATMENT OF SUCCESSIVE OR SELECTED VERSES IN CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. "*The word of Jeremiah.*" A revival of prophecy marked this epoch. Long silent under Manasseh and Amon, it now was heard again (see Intro. i. 6).

The name "Jeremiah" means either "*Jehovah throws down*" (*Hengstenberg* and *Lange*, deriving the name from "Ramah"), indicating that God would overthrow by him His foes: or "*Jehovah exalts*" (*Speaker's Commentary*, from word "Ram," high), denoting that none should cast down him whom God upholds.

But the name was borne by others of no significant character, exalted office, or special mission. (1 Chron. v. 24, xii. 4, 10, 13; 2 Kings xxiii. 31; Neh. x. 3, xii. 1; Jer. xxxv. 3.) It is not our name makes us great; the mission we fulfil and the grace God bestows, these make our lives of worth.

I. The voice of prophecy heard among men. He was entrusted with "words" to speak to Judah and the nations.

1. *The necessity for Divinely-sent*

words. Nation was *ignorant* (Book of Law lost); *indifferent* (to conscience, memory, Divine claims); *insensible* (not believing in or preparing against looming peril). Certainly desirable some voice should appeal for God and truth.

2. *The mission of Divinely-sent words.* To arouse the people to *repentance*, to *true piety* (not merely the "form of godliness"), and to *escape* by national humiliation "the wrath to come" (chap. xxxvi. 3).

3. *The results of Divinely-sent words.* Effect of Jeremiah's preaching on Judah would be either (*a.*) To *lead back the heart to God*, and so prove a "savour of life unto life;" or (*b.*) *to increase their hardness of heart*, their responsibility, guilt, and doom; "a savour of death unto death."

Divine words, by a Divinely-inspired speaker, cannot be heard without results, saving or hardening, on hearers.

So when *Christ spoke:* John xv. 22, ix. 41, "Take heed how ye hear."

II. The messages of prophecy brought to men.

Before a prophet it is natural to ask, *What* words he comes to utter? (Acts xvii. 18–20, x. 33.)

1. *The tidings which the "words" convey.*

a. Of mingled import. Not all denunciatory. Dark though Judah's criminality, God did not send only words of wrath and menace, but pitiful, pleading, promising also.

b. Suggested by man's spiritual case. Our state, mood, actions, call forth specific "words." God's messages meet man in every circumstance and condition. *We* turn from the vile in silent loathing, refuse words with those who wrong us; but God speaks to all.

c. Foretelling doom and redemption. Doom from "the North;" redemption by the "Lord our Righteousness." Temporal ruin to Judah; but a darker destiny for those who reject the salvation of Christ. Temporal restoration, and a Messiah incarnate in Palestine, to Judah; but a spiritual return to God, and possession of Heavenly Land, for those who rest in Jesus. "With Him in paradise."

2. *The calling which the Prophet fulfils.*

a. He utters what he receives from God. Is *not a philosopher*, to evolve truths; but *a prophet*, to accept a message and utter it. His are not, therefore, earth-born speeches, not of human wisdom or human wishes. Preachers are to "tell what seen and heard" (Luke vii. 22).

b. Announces truths with a grieving heart. Sorrowing over the sin he has to denounce, and the doom he has to pronounce. Not angry with the people (Num. xx. 10); "not desiring the woeful day" (Jer. xvii. 16); but with tearful pity (chap. ix. 1), as with Paul (Phil. iii. 18).

c. Suffering at the hands of those he warns. (John iii. 20, x. 31, 39; Gal. iv. 16.) The preacher of righteousness is a living denunciation of those who love sin and disobey God. So, too, is every Christian whose character and actions speak out for the Lord against human indifference and iniquity; therefore he is maligned and maltreated.

3. *The hearers to whom the words apply. To Judah first*, as being his own nation. "Beginning at Jerusalem." For there is a patriotism of Divine service (comp. Rom. ix. 1–3, x. 1).

But also "*to the nations*," ver. 4. The world needs the "words." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Ver. 2. "*To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah.*"

Theme: THE PROPHET'S TIMELY ARRIVAL.

Jerusalem and Judah had already heard the Divine sentence of overthrow from former prophets; now the time was near; and as the interval diminished, God raised up this earnest, pleading witness under the third king before the Captivity.

I. God discerns the spiritual necessities of the age.

He had given Josiah as king; but more was required.

1. *The royal reformation.* The king, alone in his pious zeal, was doing all a king could; rectifying the evil customs,

instituting religious observances, stemming crime, establishing Jehovah's worship. But notwithstanding all, there remained still:

2. *The nation's degeneracy.* The king's work could not reach the nation's heart, could not renew Judah, and recall the people to spiritual allegiance to Jehovah. All was external thus far. There was needed, and therefore sent:

3. *The sacred call.* It was Jeremiah's work to plead for God, speak to the heart of Judah, allure the nation's trust and love. This inner work remained to be done. And the prophet came upon the scene to supply the lack which the king's work made more evident.

II. God sends companionship in holy and arduous work.

Jeremiah came to the aid of Josiah. "At first no man stood by him." But lonely service will weary the most heroic heart. Christ sent His disciples "two and two." All sacred ministry asks helpful companionship.

1. *It supplemented the royal deficiency.* Not only

a. The *impotence* of the king, who could not attempt the persuasive ministry; the spiritual pleading with the people, needful to awaken their sympathetic response to his reforming plans; but

b. The *ignorance* of the king. The Scriptures were lost; Josiah did not know the Law and Covenants until after he had reigned eighteen years, when the Book was found. A child of guilty Amon, brought up in a corrupt court, he could have received no religious instruction. Jeremiah supplied this lack, as Aaron supplemented Moses' deficiency.

2. *It sanctioned the royal work.* Jeremiah's timely arrival would:

a. Show the king God's approval of his designs; and

b. Impress the nation with the urgency and need of a complete return to God.

III. God supplies effective helps to conversion.

Could He have done more to aid Judah to return to Him than by giving *so devotedly religious a king,* and *so pathetically patriotic a prophet?*

1. *Guilt and irreligion were condemned and discouraged.* Both king and prophet expressed Divine disapproval of wrong. None were left in doubt whether to "call good evil or evil good." Sinners cannot plead *ignorance* or *unconsciousness,* of sin.

2. *Calls and opportunities were offered to newness of life.* Oh, how they surround *us!* The Gospel, the Cross, the Spirit, our instructors, all plead with us. Jeremiah's ministry was an interval of hope to Judah. We have "an accepted time, a day of salvation."

3. *Neglect of God was left without justification or excuse.* They would not hearken (Heb. x. 26–29). "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Ver. 2, 3. *Theme:* THE CHANGEFUL INCIDENTS OF A LIFE'S WORK.

Life is full of changes, reverses, and uncertainties. (See Addenda to chap. i., "*Changes.*")

I. *His mission began in auspicious times.*

All encouraging and helpful to the prophet's mission. King friendly to his work; nation aroused by royal activities; Temple services re-established; Book of Law soon found.

II. *His office continued amid regal changes.*

1. The various character of kings. Each unlike the other. Royal goodness not hereditary. (See *Critical Notes,* 5, above.)

2. The royal attitude towards the prophet. What an influence, in furthering or retarding the servants of God, the throne exerts!

3. The overthrow of royal opponents. Each crowned head that lifted itself against God's purpose and the prophet's mission was bowed to ignominious shame (Ps. ii. 2–4).

III. *His prophecies closed amid national calamity.* Destruction and exile.

1. His warnings fulfilled upon the disobedient.

2. His messages followed the captives. He still was with them, and spoke for God among them in Egypt.

3. His promises lighted up their exile, pointing them on to Restoration and to Christ.

Thus:

i. *We cannot perceive the end of a thing from its beginning.* A career began amid national reformation, closed amid utter overthrow and ruin. What reverses enter life! How may promises perish amid disaster!

ii. *God hides the sterner duty from us at the outset.* Strength and courage and faith must grow, or Jonahs would always flee from life's severer ordeals and tasks. "He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," does not lay upon us more than we can bear.

iii. *Sacred work must be done regardless of surroundings.* It is not for the Lord's servants to "faint in the day of adversity." Kings may menace, perils may arise: but

> "Where duty calls or danger,
> Be never wanting there."

Painful as are the mutations around us—and they were to Jeremiah—still we must be loyal in our duty to God, and responsive to sacred claims.

iv. *Our mission is to act the part the hour demands.* Help the good Josiah; withstand the rebellious Jehoiakim; chide and correct the compromising Zedekiah; go with the captives into their affliction. Suit our work for Christ to the characters around us, and to the circumstances in which we find them. Human life is not stereotyped; Christian work must be versatile.

v. *Every crisis finds the dutiful servant sufficient and sustained.* For God is *able* to make him stand; yea, and he *shall be* holden up. So this prophet found. So all who are the Lord's (2 Cor. ii. 14).

Ver. 5. Foreknowledge and predestination.

God's address here is unequivocal and emphatic. Two antagonistic opinions held: 1. Divine purposes are *absolute* with man, and include the determination by God of man's will and life. 2. Divine purposes are *conditional* on man; they foresee and accord with man's own determination.

Certainly Jeremiah's will had to be subordinated; but it was a free subordination. There was no violation of his liberty of action; God gently conquered his reluctance and rectified his fears. This Divine work upon him *gave him liberty*, set him free from enthralling misgivings and dreadful apprehensions; raised him into assurance and reliance on Jehovah; his *subjugation was his "translation* from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

I. Facts affirmed.

1. *The unborn child foreknown of God.* "Before I formed, I knew thee." The Divine idea antedates the Divine act (Ps. cxxxix. 16). Yet this assertion of mere foreknowledge is not all which the Hebrew word "knew" implies. "Verbum cognitionis verbum *favoris* est." It is to be taken in the sense of having a regard for; I approved of thee. "I *know* him (Abraham), that he will command his children," &c. (Gen. xviii. 19; comp. Ps. 1, 6; Nahum 1, 7. See cognate N. T. word, Matt. vii. 23). "Those who *know* (revere and cherish) Thy name," &c. (Ps. ix. 10; comp. Hos. viii. 2).

2. *A life predestinated to God's service.* "Before birth I *sanctified* thee." Not from (after) birth, but from *before* birth. We may understand the word "sanctified" as meaning (with *Henderson* and *Lange*) *set apart to sacred service;* they contending that primarily the word "does not mean to be pure or holy; that God had cleansed Jeremiah from the pollution of original sin, or had regenerated him by His Spirit; but that He had *separated* him in His eternal counsel to his appointed work." So Samson (Judges xiii. 5); Isaiah (xlix. 1); John the Baptist (Luke i. 15); Paul (Gal. i. 15). Others claim that the primary significance is to *be pure, clean* (*Speaker's Commentary*); and here, therefore, "I made thee holy," and "so to dedicate to holy purposes" (comp. 2 Sam. viii. 11). *Keil* observes and infers that "God has predetermined before our birth what is to be our calling on earth, and He has accordingly so *influenced our origin and growth* in the womb as to prepare us for what we are to become and to accomplish," &c

Three interpretations: (*a.*) *Eternal separation to God's service.* (*b.*) Absolute *sanctification prior to birth;* personal purity. (*c.*) *Control over the life* prior to birth so as *to effect individual adaptation* for the sacred services he would have to fulfil.

The last is preferable. He whom God foreknows is born with a Divinely secured aptitude for Divine work. (See Addenda to chap. i., "*Fore-ordination.*")

3. *God's prophet a Divine production.* "I ordained,"—*i.e.*, "*appointed*" or "*gave.*" A prophet is a Divine benefaction; he is born as a boon; his ministry is a gracious bestowment. Thus:

a. Gifted witnesses of God are gifts to the age from God (comp. Eph. iv. 11, 12). How melancholy if the Divine Father sent forth no messenger to an erring world! "All gone out of the way, none seeketh after God;"—yet God leaves men to their own wilfulness, unchecked, uninformed, uninvited! Dreadful if *always* true—"I looked, but there was none to help, and I wondered that there was no intercessor." But comp. Jer. xi. 7, vii. 25.

b. Their presence among men a testimony of God, and their voice a testimony from God. A prophet is a proof that God is: his endowments and mission are supernatural: and his attestations are miraculous: and his word speaks from God; inspired, authoritative. "He that heareth you, heareth Me." Such are the assertions of this verse.

II. Truths evolved.

1. *Events of time do but unfold projects of eternity.* Occurrences on earth, as if the veil is thrown aside, show Divine arrangements till then hidden. God is planning; time is unrolling His plans, "bringing hidden devices to pass." God is interested therefore in all incidents; they lie within His anticipation. "My Father worketh hitherto."

2. *Opportune incidents are Divinely regulated events.* It was opportune that Jeremiah came just at that juncture of Judah's history, while Josiah was endeavouring to reform the nation, and ere the foe was at the gates. Was it merely fortuitous, a coincidence? Or rather, "He worketh all things after the *counsel* of His own will."

3. *A child's birth and occupation work out God's purposes.* There is a providence therefore over our entrance into life. Yes, and the fitfulness of childhood, wilfulness of youth, the risk and uncertainty of opening manhood (as we see them), only screen the movements of a Hand which controls all, *directing the life into appointed paths.* We work into and work out Divine intents.

4. *Messages from God await the advent of a herald.* God had much to say to Judah, even while Josiah worked on alone; but Jeremiah's hour was not yet. Startling to think of solemn messages laid up in heaven, kept sealed, until a babe is born at Anathoth, and nourished into youth. But the word of the Lord comes by the appointed herald at the needed hour. "O Lord, send by whom Thou wilt send."

Thus, therefore, a man pleading for God is God's pleading with man.

Query. Is the Divine foreknowledge and predestination true only of *earth's greatest sons, and God's special witnesses?* In a sense true of all men. "Known unto God are all His works, from the beginning of the world." "A man's goings are of the Lord." Each should realise his place in God's plans, and ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

"Stand up! thou art as true a man
As moves the human mass among;
As much a part of the great plan
That with creation's dawn began,
As any of the throng.

. . . . . .

"The great! what better they than thee?
As theirs, is not thy will as free?
Has God with equal favours thee
Neglected to endow?
"With these, and passions under ban,
True faith, and holy trust in God,
Thou art the peer of any man!
Look up, then, that thy little span
Of life may be well trod."

Ver. 6. **The pleadings of fear.**

Literally, "*Alas! my Lord Jehovah!*" There is no resistance on Jeremiah's part, but he shrinks back alarmed. So at the vision of the cherubim, Isaiah cried, "Woe is me!" and Ezekiel "sat astonished seven days." Jeremiah's gentle and tender spirit submits, but with a cry of pain" (*Speaker's Commentary*). "*I cannot speak,*" &c. The

Targum paraphrases this correctly, "*I cannot prophesy*"—*i.e.*, I have not the powers of oratory necessary for success. The prophets of Israel were the national preachers in religious matters, and their orators in political. The reluctance exhibited by God's servants (Exod. iv. 10, vi. 12, 30; Jonah i. 3) to accept the call shows that they did not assume the office under the impulse of self-deceiving fanaticism.

I. *Weakness is the channel of Divine efficiency.* God works by weak things (1 Cor. i. 26–29); for they most magnify God (Ps. viii. 2).

II. *Conscious disqualification the preparation for noblest achievements.* Equipped with nothing of self, there was room for God's grace to clothe him. He became mighty because he felt himself nothing.

A prophet's qualification is not aptitude for uttering Divine discourses or foreseeing calamities, but speaking words given him with all assurance, and as an ambassador. (Addenda to chap. i., "*I am a child*," and "*I cannot speak.*")

III. *Terror in the presence of responsibility.*

a. Overwhelmed with vastness. "Ah, Lord God!"

b. Timidity shrinks appalled. "Ah!"

c. Inexperience dreads duty. A *child* to *speak!*

d. Incapacity urged. "I cannot speak."

e. Youth's natural misgivings. "I am a child."

Ver. 5–7. *Theme:* FEARS AND COMFORTS IN PROSPECT OF LABOUR FOR GOD.

Here is a young man trembling on the threshold of a life of arduous service. Here is the Master equipping him for the service, dissipating his fears and assuring his heart.

The scene is a common one. Trembling fingers ever gird on the armour. Nor is it wonderful. Think of magnitude of the undertaking, feebleness of instrument, deadly hostility of foe. God's Davids always had to meet the world's Goliaths with nothing but sling and stone.

I. The fear of God's servants in prospect of labour.

1. *He feels his weakness.* "A child."

a. Having no influence. Men will listen to those of riper years. Speakers who can appeal to public services rendered, and to old and tried friends, thus secure attention. Jeremiah had no such advantages.

b. Having no experience. How can a "child" find the clue to intricacies of human heart? How successfully combat sophistries of man?

c. Being unstable. "A child" is easily influenced, soon afraid. While seeking to deliver others, himself may be ensnared.

2. *He feels his ignorance.* How speak of themes which exhaust vocabulary of angels? How little know of Thy word and ways, or of deplorable and dreadful condition of men!

Every preacher should feel this. Think of the surpassing *excellencies of Jesus;* and we but beggars outside the city gate, who yet have to tell of the Majesty dwelling amidst splendours of palace! We only know in part; have seen but glimpses of the King. True, we know enough to bless ourselves, but not enough to do Him the honour He deserves.

How little we know *of man.* Each different from his fellow; exposed to specific temptations and sorrows.

3. *He feels his unworthiness.* "A child," undistinguished, unknown.

4. *He dreads the enmity of man.* Though "a child" he knows the hostility of man to truth. Not unnatural to dread world's malice. "Crucified together with Christ," is no mere poetic fancy. We have fellowship with His shame, scourging, darkness, distress. Men drove rough iron into the Master's hands, will not bind ours with silken cords; placed on His head crown of thorns, will not place on ours crown of roses; gave Him vinegar, not us wine; pierced His side, will not merely menace ours!

II. The comforts of God's servants in prospect of labour.

If our fears be many, our consolations abound.

1. *The assurance they are called to the work.* "I ordained thee a prophet." Despite his ignorance, unworthiness, and fear.

2. *The knowledge of the purpose of God.* "Thou shalt go to whom I send thee." Some find here reason for inactivity; they say, "He will save His elect," and then fold their arms. But God's purpose is not only that Israel shall be saved, but that Jeremiah should "go." It contemplates the means as well as end.

Rejoice at the knowledge that it is part of Divine plan to *use us.*

3. *The promise of the presence of God.* "I am with thee," &c. (ver. 8). We have not to carry out His purpose without His help. This promise a sovereign antidote for every fear. Was he *weak?* The Almighty was near. *Ignorant?* The "wisdom" was at hand. *Unworthy?* The Lord of glory stood by him.

4. *The fact that the message was from God.* "Whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak." We have not to guess our theme; we have the mind of Christ. The teacher sent from God may and must be dogmatic.—"*Items and Twigs.*"

Ver. 8. He had never occupied any public station or performed any public duty. "You need not fear their *faces*—the thing that timid young men are most wont to fear. Think only that the Lord is with you, and let his presence be your joy and strength."

1. His ministry would lead him before high and mighty personages.

2. His messages would arouse the malignity of haughty potentates.

Not easy to *confront* such men, to *condemn* them, to *incur their hatred,* to *denounce their designs.* Fear of man must retire before *fealty to God.*

Ver. 9, 10. *Theme:* INCAPACITY DIVINELY RECTIFIED.

There is a special feature in Jeremiah's preparation and equipment—no *human presence* came upon the scene to render aid, as with Saul of Tarsus (Acts ix. 17); nor even *angelic* interposition, as with Joshua (Zech. iii. 4, 5); nay, nor yet *exalted seraphim,* as with Isaiah (vi. 6, 7)—it was a direct *act of* JEHOVAH. Already there had been (ver. 8)—

I. *Courage inspired.* For God requires valour, and a dauntless faith These he called into exercise.

II. *Ability conferred* (ver. 9).

1. The act: stretching forth of the Divine hand = exertion of Divine power. Something was accomplished. There was more than an *exertion;* an *emanation* of power.

2. The touch: it indicated Divine energy communicated. It had passed into him whom the Hand touched, like electric fluid into a receiver.

3. The localisation of power: the "mouth." Jeremiah's power was to be in speech; not in physical vigour, nor even mental force, but in uttering God-given "words." The local incapacity rectified.

III. *Communication intrusted.* "I have *put my words* in thy mouth." This was a tangible pledge of inspiration. God committed His messages into Jeremiah's charge. Henceforth he would not speak of himself, but "as the Spirit gave him utterance."

It was a real, not imaginary occurrence; a positive contact of Deity with the now divinely-endowed prophet, and it imparted to him his sacred commission.

IV. *Installation completed* (ver. 10).

1. The dividing line of his life. "This day." A mere Anathoth youth until that day; henceforth God's prophet. "All things become new."

2. His exalted mission. "Set over," &c. God's deputy: placed as overseer, above kings and nations, to supervise and control events. For his word would work more potently than royal designs or strife of armies (Jer. xxiii. 29). The issue showed this (comp. Acts v. 38, 39).

V. *Work defined.* "To root out," &c. He had the highest authority (comp. Mark i. 22). He moved amid magnates doing Heaven's behests, foreshadowing the Lord's mission (John v. 2). God's Word has much to *overthrow* and demolish—in nations, in human habits, in secret affections and thoughts. All forms of sin must fall before its condemnations (Heb. iv. 12, 13). On the scene of ruin it then begins "to *build and plant*" (comp. Eph. iii. 20–22, ii. 10).

Such is the work every man of God has to do. Taking the sword of the Spirit, he is to exterminate and slay all hostility to God; and then to rear on the ruins of sin a "holy temple unto the Lord." "Our sufficiency is of God."

Ver. 9. *Theme:* THE TOUCH OF GOD. "*The Lord touched my mouth.*"

Query. Was the act objective, or only subjective; an actual occurrence, or an impression on the inner consciousness?

"The Lord cannot literally have put His words into the prophet's mouth; He can only have given him the charism of which the words were the necessary result."—*Lange.*

"Attactus oris signum est notans efficaciam spiritus sancti, quippe qui digitus Dei sit, aperiens labia ministrorum verbi" (Ps. li. 13, 14, 17; Luke xxi. 15).—*Förster.*

A purely *subjective* transaction, "as the moment when the presentiment first flashed clearly through the soul of Jeremiah that his prophetic calling was of Divine appointment."—*Ewald.*

"A *physical* and *literal incident;*" and that "the Son of God, in pre-intimation of His blessed incarnation, appeared to Jeremiah in a human form."—*Starke.*

"The hand is the instrument of making and doing; the touching of Jeremiah's mouth by the hand of God is consequently an emblematic token that God frames in his mouth what he is to speak. It is a tangible pledge of ἔμπνευσις, *inspiratio*, embodiment of that influence exercised on the human spirit by means of which holy men of God speak, being moved by the Holy Ghost. The act is a real occurrence, taking place not indeed in the earthly, corporeal sphere, but experienced in spirit, and of the *nature of ecstasy.*"—*Keil.*

"An appropriate symbolic act. . . . The touching of the lips of Isaiah with a live coal (chap. vi. 7), and the giving of a book to Ezekiel to eat (chap. ii. 8–10), were similarly symbolical of prophetic qualification, and implied a gift of inspiration (comp. Dan. x. 16). In all these instances the actions occurred in supernatural vision."—*Henderson.*

"The symbol of the bestowal of divine grace and help, by which that want of eloquence, which the prophet had pleaded as a disqualification, was removed; and distinctly was an *external act*, impressing itself *objectively* upon his consciousness, though in what manner it is impossible for us to tell."—*Speaker's Com.*

I. The varied consequences of the Divine touch.

Old Testament.

1. Expiation (Isa. vi. 6).

2. Inspiration (Jer. i. 9; comp. Ezek. ii. 8–10; Isa. li. 16; comp. Acts ii. 3).

3. Impartation of strength (Dan. x. 16).

New Testament.

Blessing infants (Luke xviii. 15).

Removing organic defects (Mark vii. 32, viii. 22).

Curing diseases (Matt. viii. 2, 15).

Upraising the prostrate (Mark ix. 27).

Awaking the dead (Luke vii. 14).

Reviving the overwhelmed soul (Rev. i. 17).

Infer:

1. *That the hand of power and renewal is the same in the Old and New Testaments.* "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

2. *That all remedial changes in man are Divine.* "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. xxi. 5). "We are His workmanship" (Eph. ii. 10).

II. Human need of the transforming touch of God.

1. *These varied incidents denote man's varied ailments and afflictions.*

a. Incompetent for Divine work (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel).

b. Suffering from physical malformations and maladies.

c. Bowed down before visions of glory (John on Patmos).

2. The gracious issues of the Divine touch *reveal the suitability and sufficiency of grace in God.*

Power unlimited is in His hand. The everlasting hills tremble and smoke if

He touch them. "Right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." He never stretched forth His hand to work on frail humanity without (*a.*) *immediate* results, no delay in the remedy; nor without (*b.*) *appropriate* results, the very effect desired ensued; nor without (*c.*) *beneficent* results; in all cases "He put His hands upon them and *blessed* them." Contact with Christ is life-giving, healthful, saving.

Ver. 10. *Theme:* THE PROPHET A SUBVERTER OF KINGDOMS. "*I have set thee over the nations*," &c.

The strict and literal import of words here used assign to the Divine teacher a sway above sceptres, a power mightier than potentates, a spiritual domination over dynasties and temporal kings.

As he stands before God he is a mere servant, a trembling child; but as he stands in God's stead among men, he is above rulers and princes, installed as vicegerent, swaying the destinies of kingdoms.

This title (Pâkeed) is given only to those invested with high authority—Egyptian officers (Gen. xli. 34), Abimelech's viceroy (Judges ix. 28), the high-priest's deputy (2 Chron. xxiv. 11), the Levitical representative (Neh. xi. 22), chief governor in Temple (Jer. xx. 1). Jeremiah was God's highest officer, supreme above monarchs and nations.

I. His official supremacy and supervision. "I have set thee over," &c.

1. *Empowered with a sway superior to kings;* for their sway was soon broken, their word frustrated; but *his* endured and was accomplished. For there was a Power *behind* his word, and therefore power *in* his word.

They thought to defeat Jeremiah's influence by imprisoning him; but his sway went on. "*The word of God was not bound;*" it still worked towards fulfilment. Every living servant of God is thus endowed with a sway and a dignity above potentates. A chained prisoner could say to "King Agrippa" and "noble Festus," "I would to God ye were both almost and altogether *such as I am!*"

2. *Intrusted with the destiny of kingdoms.* "He was to have his eye upon the conduct of nations, and to utter predictions of prosperity or adversity accordingly." — *Henderson.* What was effected in accordance with, is spoken of as a consequence of, his word. This mode of speech also indicates the certainty of the events he announced: they would follow as effects of the cause. The prophet's word would thus determine the fate of nations (comp. Ezek. xliii. 3; Jer. xxv. 15–17 *sq.*; Hos. vi. 5).

II. The irresistible activity of his word.

In this case the spiritual was ascendant over temporal authority. Divine speech is more stable than sceptres; words are mightier than swords. "His words were at the same time deeds, real exhibitions of power."—*Lange.* "The word of God in His prophets has power to do what it says will be done."—*Wordsworth.* "With the words of the Lord he is to destroy and to build up peoples and kingdoms. The Word of God is a power that carries out His will, and accomplishes that whereto He sends it (Isa. lv. 10 *sq.*). Against this power nothing earthly can stand."—*Keil.*

"At first we should say, 'Such words can never be applied in their literal import to any seer or teacher: they belong to the warrior and the conqueror. We must explain them by a figure of speech—he who discourses of the fall of kingdoms is represented as himself the overthrower of them.' I do not think that either the analogy of language or the facts of the case justify that method of interpretation. If the prophet only talked of what was happening or what was to happen, no poetical licence could permit us to confound him with the subverters of thrones and societies. But have we yet to learn that a great teacher or reformer, though he may never take a sword into his hand, does that which swords cannot do; that swordsmen, in fact, only carry out upon the surface that which he is doing underground? The uprooting of the thoughts and principles in which acts originate, the planting the seeds of life which are hereafter to bring forth fruits that all will recognise, are his functions. If he has received any inspiration, any vital power

at all, it must be one which enables him to produce a movement at the very heart of human life and society, in a region of which the ordinary statesman knows nothing."—*Maurice.*

This power would be used for the most part *destructively;* the overthrowing being expressed by four different similes; yet also *constructively*, though to a lesser extent—only two words describing this part of his mission. The first is accomplished by *prophesying Divine judgment;* the second, by *promising Divine mercy.*

See the *power of prophecy* (Ezek. xxxvii. 7–10), and of the LIVING WORD (Rev. ii. 16, xix. 15; Isa. xi. 4).

Ver. 15. *Theme:* WAR THE STROKE OF GOD.

"I will call," = *I am calling.* The present tense of Hebrew indicates judgment has begun; the Almighty has risen up to decisive action; a Voice which will be obeyed is calling for the long-delayed retribution; Jehovah is summoning His hosts to the war. (See Addenda to chap. i., "*War.*")

I. Divine punishment by human agency. "I will call," &c.

This fact is the basis of text. What man does, he does in obedience to a Force higher than himself. God uses him.

1. *Miraculous forms of justice are needless.*

God *has* them, and *used* them (2 Kings vi. 15–17, xix. 35).

But the armies of nations are His, to do with as He wills. So also affliction, accident, reverses of fortune, mental and physical disasters. Even crafty and covetous men, who can wreck strong fortresses of wealth and position, *God can* use.

2. *Common incidents of calamity are not the less supernatural.* If God employs them, though His hand be not seen, they are supernatural. He now avoids the extraordinary methods of old times, and works by the ordinary.

II. Jehovah's forces of retribution. "All the families of the kingdoms," &c. = Nebuchadnezzar's motley combination which made up the Chaldean army comp. Isa. xiii. 4, 5).

1. *Armies assemble at His bidding.* Nebuchadnezzar or Cyrus may *lead* their war-hosts to the siege, but God reigns over rulers; the "King of kings" doeth "according to *His* will among the armies of heaven and inhabitants of earth." All wars have behind them a *Divine use.*

2. *National overthrow testifies to national sin.* So in Judah's case. Guilt is the occasion of all catastrophes. *History* shows this so with *nations* (see Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem; and recently Paris). *Experience* reveals the same law at work among men.

III. Military counsels fulfil God's commands.

'They shall set every one his throne," &c.; indicating a tribunal of judgment, a *council of war* concerning the fate of Jerusalem. The decision would be as God had determined (comp. *Critical Notes*, above, 8).

1. *Over decisions of court the "Judge of all the earth" presides.* This still true concerning senates, chambers, parliaments. See the fact as relating to our Lord (Acts iv. 27, 28, ii. 23; Isa. xiv. 24–27).

2. *Over the plots of armies the "Lord of hosts" sways rule.* Their stratagems He oft defeated; their designs He sometimes prospered. (See "*Scripture battles.*") This equally true of *plots of wicked* against righteous, and of *hellish foes* (Ps. xxxvii. 12, 13; Ezek. xxxv. 10; Rev. xx. 9).

IV. Foes sweep down on those whom God abandons. "*Every one his throne* against Jerusalem."

1. *The protection of Providence withdrawn*, they invite the spoilers. "Where the carcase is, there the eagles will gather together."

2. *The restraint of Providence withdrawn*, the spoilers hasten to the prey. Just as *serpents* in the wilderness rushed into camp as soon as God's restraining care was forfeited.

a. Unkept by God, our life is hourly imperilled. How different this from Ps xci. 1–7.

b. Around those Divinely forsaken the hosts of evil quickly assemble.

c. Left to our enemies ensures utter ruin. As with Judah (2 Thess. ii. 10–12).

Ver. 16. "*I will utter my judgments*," &c. This phrase, "to speak or pronounce judgment," is properly to *have a lawsuit with one*, an expression peculiar to Jeremiah (*cf.* iv. 12, xii. 1, xxxix. 5), is equivalent to pleading with a person (*cf.* xii. 1 with ii. 35; Ezek. xx. 35), and signifies not only remonstrating against wrong-doing, but also the passing of condemnation, and so includes *trial* and *sentencing.*—*Keil.*

"To pronounce a judgment or judicial sentence upon any one. Jehovah threatened the Jews with punishment on account of their rebellious conduct; He now declares He will carry His threatenings into effect by means of their enemies, who would sit in judgment and inflict the calamities upon them they merited. The sentences delivered by the foreign princes would be in effect the judgments of God. He would employ them as His instruments in carrying them into execution."—*Henderson.*

"By the capture of Jerusalem God as judge pronounces solemn condemnation upon her."—*Speaker's Com.*

"Viewed in one light, war is the boiling caldron of human passion, upset by hazard, and bringing only ruin in its course; in the other, it is God sitting in judgment, with the kings of the earth as His assessors, solemnly pronouncing judgment upon the guilty."—*Idem.*

Through these idolatrous enemies of God's people Jehovah would execute His judgments.

Theme: UNCONSCIOUS DIVINE AGENTS.

I. *Divine control over the workings of the human will.*

II. *The ungodly may unknowingly further God's designs.* So Joseph's brethren who sold him. So Israel's enemies in the wilderness.

III. *Reckless hostility may but obey His behests.* "The wrath of man shall praise Him." Indulging their idolatrous hatred, they wrecked the Temple and the city of God, and thus *chastised Judah as God designed;* and *fulfilled prophecy*, thus confirming revelation for after-time.

IV. *Man in his most impious moods is still a subject of Divine government.* The godless cannot repel the Almighty from their lives. He may work by their very impiety, and compel them blindly to obey Him.

V. *To be in the hands of God for His use in our rebellion*, forewarns our being *in His hands for our just requital.* As Egypt (Jer. xlvi. 13); as Chaldea (Jer. l. 1–3, 9, 10).

Ver. 17. I. *God's method of holding judgment.* Brings nations before Jerusalem, and lets them determine the fate of the city. Their resolves respecting Jerusalem would express God's thought and plan.

II. *God's chastisements are based upon deserts.* "Judgments touching their wickedness," &c. They would suffer nothing they had not merited. Judicial sentence, righteous, deserved.

Ver. 17. *Theme:* HEROISM IN GOD'S SERVICE. "*Gird up thy loins, stand and speak*," &c.

Girding the loins = resolute preparation for the performance of duty. A metaphor: the Orientals, who wore long robes, bound them up with a girdle ere attempted work or started on journey (comp. 2 Kings iv. 29; Job xxxviii. 3; Luke xii. 35; Eph. vi. 14). God here summons Jeremiah to

(*a.*) Earnest exertion; (*b.*) firm purpose; (*c.*) ready alacrity; (*d.*) cheerful hope, not despairing that good might ensue from his ministry.

He is further reminded that

(*a.*) Fear is a snare and dishonour. (*b.*) God is greater than the greatest, therefore should His servants bear themselves with assurance. (*c.*) Cowardice will entail confusion and contempt. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Addenda to chap. i., "*Courage before kings.*")

I. God will be served by courageous, not by craven souls.

A ministry of "whispering humbleness" is puerile and revolting. The *age* wants men. *Men appreciate* manly fortitude. *God is dishonoured* by a *fawning ambassador.* Lion-hearted preachers wanted.

II. God's work requires resolute preparation and purpose.

"Gird and stand," = Equip thyself,

and with a stalwart heart preach My words to the land.

1. It is a *determined* work. "Whether they will hear or forbear."

2. It is a *denouncing* work. "Speak to them *all* that I command," "against kings," &c., ver. 18.

3. It is a *destructive* work. "To root out, pull down," &c., ver. 10.

4 It is a *Divine* work. In *God's stead* and *name*, speak. "Who sufficient?"

III. God's servants must confront all menaces with a dauntless faith in Him.

1. *As one bearing awful tidings*, which must not be trifled with. "Stand and speak all I command thee."

2. *As a messenger who will himself be condemned if he fail in his charge.* Warn the people; with earnestness, and all-conquering importunity, "lest their blood be required at thy hand" (Ezek. xxxiii.). "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 16, 17).

3. *With unabashed fortitude*, remembering *for Whom he speaks.* "I command thee:" "be not dismayed at their faces." For who is man, even the mightiest, when God is in our thought? What can man do to silence us, when we bethink of the eternal issues at stake, and the urgency of redemption?

Ver. 18 and 19 suggest further

IV. God's witness assured of invincible strength.

1. The hostile array, ver. 18.

2. Their malevolent treatment, ver. 19.

3. His impregnable strength, ver. 18.

4. *His Almighty fortress*, ver. 19, "I am with thee."

OUTLINES ON NOTICEABLE TOPICS AND TEXTS.

Ver. 5. *Topic:* The Divine Formation of a Human Life. *Text:* "*I formed thee.*"

This *rectifies* the scientific idea of natural development; asserts an Active Cause working for definite ends in the instance of an individual; that God has something to do with our formation and our career.

It also *explains* the startling individuality of character and work which is often apparent, and which cannot be accounted for by parentage and circumstances; children do not reproduce their ancestry always; grand departures from the rule have given the ages their greatest and most useful men. Hence it is right to affirm that

I. Individuality of character and life is a specific creation of God.

1. Our natural qualities are not accidents of human progeniture. (See Addenda to chap. i., "*Divine formation of a life.*")

2. Our religious disposition is not determined by domestic culture—*e.g.*, Manasseh was the wicked son of good Hezekiah, Josiah the good son of wicked Amon.

3. Our personality is a factor in society which God authorises and employs.

Ergo, a. The sacredness of our individuality.

b. God's interest in each life, and our use of life.

c. Our place in Divine regard. His readiness to befriend and bless. His desire for our piety and salvation. He who made us, made us for Himself, for His glory and our weal.

II. The Divine purposes forecast the issues of human birth.

1. Our existence argues that there is a place for us in the world; awaiting us, suited to us, needing us.

2. Our being in the world is itself an incentive to the faithful use of life.

3. Our special aptitudes denote and designate our calling. God gives us our distinctive powers. His purpose for us is that we use ourselves, and in the most useful way, and that we make earthly existence a pathway to eternal blessedness and reward.

III. A mission on earth is predetermined to the man of God. "I ordained thee a prophet."

God does not ordain the careers of evil men. Men are free to resist and reverse God's plans for them. They are not helpless slaves of Divine decrees.

1. For the Divine servant there awaits a Divine service. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

2. A life of religious usefulness works out God's plans. *Ergo*, His plans are beneficent. He who uses life to bless others, and brings wanderers back to God, does what God desires and designs.

3. No career of godly activity can be fruitless or unrewarded. For it effects what God arranged. And "God is not unrighteous to forget your work," &c.

IV. Equipment for sacred duties is the effect of Divine grace. "I sanctified thee."

Catholic theologians argue that Jeremiah was born without original sin. Neuman interprets the statement as that the Holy Spirit was communicated to him before birth. Hoffman, Henderson, Lange, &c., regard the word as denoting the sacred designation of his life.

1. The importance of a good life, both to God and man. The life we live does affect Him who formed us, and its influence on others may be vast and imperishable. What majestic work one life may do for God!

2. A life wrecked and wasted by sin is a calamity. It arrests the aim of God's grace; it adds some force to the rule of evil; it deprives a man of his birthright; it is a melancholy perversion and an irremediable catastrophe. Even if the soul is saved at the last, the *life is lost.*

3. Divine grace avails for the salvation and sanctification of each one. Jeremiah, like Paul, only illustrates the fulness of redemption, the abounding grace of God for others (1 Tim. i. 16).

Ver. 7. *Topic:* THE HUMAN OUTCRY SILENCED. *Text:* "*The Lord said unto me, Say not!*"

This outcry was born of shrinking, lowliness, apprehension. It indicated a lack of fortitude and faith. If allowed to rule, it would have arrested God's plans, and deprived Judah of one of her noblest prophets, and of a warning ministry urgently needed.

I. The human heart is prone to speak out against God.

1. In *self-assertion.* (*a.*) Sometimes *pride* objects to God's commands and plans: "I dislike this kind of service, this mode of salvation. It levels me!" (*b.*) Or *self-will* utters itself: "I cannot bow, cannot acquiesce, cannot think it right. My will, not Thine, be done!"

2. In *self-excusing.* (*a.*) *Cowardice* tremblingly pleads: "I cannot take up that cross. I should make shipwreck of faith. I am not fit to serve." (*b.*) *Indifference* answers with subtle voice: "Sacrifice is not required of all. God cannot have given pleasures merely to deny them. It is not urgent that I seek the Lord, or do His bidding." (*c.*) Graceless *humility* urges its plea: "I am unworthy. I am not qualified. Surely God doesn't mean or want me!"

II. Heaven's claims override all human reluctance.

1. *God has rightful authority over His creatures.* "Thou, Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (Dan. v. 22, 23). "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am!" (John xiii. 13).

2. *Man's true attitude is unhesitating acquiescence.* "Who art thou that repliest against thy *Maker?*"

3. *Divine prescience never errs in demands.* It is *folly*, therefore, and *presumption* for us to question. He does not mistake the man or the appointment. He

never calls to *service* or *salvation* the wrong person (John vi. 45 and 37; Rev. xxii. 17).

III. God silences altercation, and summons to obedience. "Say not!" "Thou shalt go; thou shalt speak."

With unquestioning promptitude we should reply to His call, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." His work is solemn, urgent, all-constraining.

1. *Our will and faculties subordinated to God.* Even as Abraham "*obeyed, not knowing* whither he went." Do not raise a difficulty in the way of God's plans. If He wants to *use* you, let Him; if to *save* you, let Him; if to *honour* you, let Him. "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good!"

2. *Our lives expended in service for God.* Times of sore hardship may make us falter; ready again to speak out against God. "Then I said, I will *not* make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name," &c. (xx. 8, 9). But our sole course is to "endure to the end."

3. *Our entire self completely abandoned to God.* No word of excuse (Luke ix. 57–end, xiv. 18). No looking back. No reservation (Luke xviii. 28). For "ye are not your own." Calvin's motto on his crest was, "I give Thee all; I keep back nothing for myself." (See Addenda to chap. i., "*Obedience.*")

Ver. 10. *Topic:* CHARGE TO PASTORS: THEIR WORK DEFINED. *Text:* "*See I have this day set thee over nations and over kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.*"

Differences between the prophet's and pastor's office: his an extraordinary, yours ordinary: his was to be exercised over nations and kingdoms, yours over a church and congregation.

Yet, even in his case, there was no civil power: he was no pope: nor was he invested with the authority of a modern bishop: no secular sway; he pulled down and built up *prophetically.* Though you have no such power as this, given by extraordinary inspiration, yet in the way of declaring God's word, "whosesoever sins you remit, they are remitted, and whosesoever sins you retain, they are retained."

Your labour is less, yet the nature of your work is the same; and the same spirit of faithfulness is required over a few things as over many.

Your work is divided into two parts:

1. *To discourage evil,* "root out, pull down, destroy, and throw down."

2. *To encourage good,* "build and plant."

The imagery is of two kinds: that of a *house,* and that of a *garden.*

1. *The Church is God's house,* God's building, and you are appointed to "labour together with God," to pull down, destroy, and throw down the rubbish, and then to build upon a new and good foundation.

2. *The Church is also God's garden,* and you are appointed to work in it, keep it in order, root out weeds, plant and cultivate the godly fruit.

I. Inquire what are the evils against which you must contend, and the methods you are to adopt in this opposition.

1. *By your public ministry root out errors in doctrine.* Respecting *God:* His character, His ways with men, His law, both in precepts and penalty. Respecting *Christ:* defend His dignity, maintain His atonement. Respecting *your people:* such as self-righteousness and presumptuous hope. Pull down also the vain expectations of *sinners.*

2. *By leading the Church, in the exercise of faithful discipline, root out evil-doers.* Churches, formerly respectable and prosperous, are decaying for want of discipline. Some pervert the parable of wheat and tares as excuse for negligence; but the field is the *world,* not the Church.

3. *By rendering your pastoral visits subservient to the purposes of conviction and*

correction. There are cases which you could not touch in the pulpit without irritating; others which do not fall under church censure, which should come within the cognisance of the pastor. This is difficult; consequently some have declined it, pleading it would offend and damage the cause. Leave results with Christ. Yet all may be done without offence: mingle counsel and encouragement with censure, as did Paul with the Corinthians.

II. What is that good which you are to encourage: what the work denoted by building and planting?

In general, encourage and impart *just sentiments.* Encourage and cultivate *holy tempers and dispositions.* A company of modest, humble, upright, diligent, holy people evidences "a good minister." But more particularly—

1. As a Builder.

1. *Be sure you lay a right foundation.* Christ is the foundation: of God's laying, of apostles' and prophets'; and you must lay Him as the foundation of faith and holiness.

2. *See that your materials be fitly framed together* (Eph. ii. 21): implying that

a. They be *hewed and squared.* What could a company of proud, prejudiced professors do together with the godly? These sins must be cut off.

b. They be formed by the same rule. Whatever variety, in some respects there must be uniformity: similarity of views; hearts renewed after image of Christ; for "what fellowship," &c. (2 Cor. vi. 14–18).

c. Every one be put in the situation for which he is formed. Some have splendid gifts, stones in front of building, for ornament and strength. Others have more private excellences, affectionate in counsel, grave in deportment. Every gift should be disposed of as that it shall be of greatest use to the whole. Offices filled by men because of their property, perverts this law.

3. *So frame the whole as that it may be a fit habitation for God* It must be God's house, not yours. Because of Nebuchadnezzar's vanity, "This is the house *I* have built!" All buildings are with a view to habitation. Build so that God may take up His abode with you.

2. As a Planter.

1. Sow "wholly a right seed."
2. Give attention to the plants as you see them grow.
3. Cultivate them by every means.
4. Pray that they may be watered by the Holy Spirit.

a. While pulling down or building, rooting out or planting, in God's house and vineyard, *do not overlook your own.* Personal religion is of utmost importance to a minister.

b. Consider that you are "a labourer together with God." He that employs you will reward you.—*Rev. Andrew Fuller.*

Ver. 19. *Topic:* OPPOSITION. *Text:* "*And they shall fight against thee,*" *&c.*

Every servant of God sure to meet opposition. In proportion as we are faithful to God expect to be assailed by man. Doctrines, habits, and acts of true servants of God antagonistic to maxims and tastes of world: they are protests against what sinners love. Success in God's service fills them with alarm: "these men turn world upside down;" and would expel us from every paradise of pleasure, cut off every supply of gratification, and abandon us to a life of melancholy.

I. The vehemence of our foes. "Fight against *thee.*"

Not fight against *principle* so much as *persons.* Aim to wound the saint more than refute his doctrine.

1. Formerly this virulence was manifested in revolting cruelties; lit fires of martyrdom; crowded prisons with sufferers for conscience' sake; drove thousands

into exile; even disturbed ashes of pious dead to emphasise their execrations of the living.

2. Now opposition resorts to more secret, though not less deadly means. Seeks to prison confidence and joys; impede progress, disturb peace, destroy spirituality.

The angel of tolerance and specious doctrine is seen, not the foul enemy: but the same implacable heart of hate prompts hostility. "They shall *fight*" to end of time, though methods vary.

II. The certainty of our security. "They shall *not prevail*."

Saints may be weary, maimed, fearful, but cannot be ultimately *defeated*. False professors will fall a prey: indeed they tempt the tempter; but true men are sure of victory. *Issue* has ever been, "We are more than conquerors."

III. The source of our confidence. "I am with thee, to deliver thee."

This assures

1. *The abiding presence of the Lord.* Near to observe our behaviour, hear our entreaties, stimulate our hearts.

2. *The constant manifestation of the power of the Lord.* "To deliver;" *i.e.*, such help shall be vouchsafed that every one of His soldiers shall "work out his own salvation."

Word of caution: Let us be careful that *our enemies are the enemies of truth;* that our strict adherence to Divine commandments is the sole occasion of their hostility.

If we suffer, let it be for the kingdom of heaven's sake, or we shall not inherit the benediction.

It is possible to fight *for* God, and yet not be fighting *with* God, nor with Divinely-appointed means: in which case defeat is neither wonderful nor undeserved.—"*Sermon Framework.*"

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER I: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. "*Anathoth.*" A poor village of some twenty houses, built among white rocks and white ruins, on a bare, grey mountain side. No trees, no verdure, no richness, no grandeur, no beauty: amid mountain solitudes and rocky dells, he (Jeremiah) mourned and wept over the foreseen calamities of his beloved country. . . . One can trace in nearly all the images and illustrations with which his writings abound, the influence of those wild scenes amid which he passed his boyhood. Mountains, rocks, wild beasts, shepherds, are again and again introduced.—*Dr. Porter's "Syria's Holy Places."*

Hither to his "fields" Abiathar was banished by Solomon after the failure of his attempt to put Adonijah on the throne (1 Kings ii. 26). This was the native place of Abiezer, one of David's thirty captains (2 Sam. xxiii. 27), and of Jehu (1 Chron. xii. 3). The "*men* of Anathoth" returned from the captivity with Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 23; Neh. vii. 27). . . . The cultivation of the priests survives in tilled fields of grain, with figs and olives. . . . The quarries still supply Jerusalem with building-stone.—*Dr. Smith's Dictionary.*

Mean as the place is now, it was then a walled town, and its ruins still afford some traces of its ancient importance.—*Kitto.*

"*Son of Hilkiah.*" *Parentage.* A young minister, when about to be ordained, stated that at one period of his life he was nearly an infidel. "But," said he, "there was one argument in favour of Christianity which I could never refute—the consistent conduct of my father."

Richard Cecil, from contemplating his mother's holy character and inward peace, was persuaded of the Faith, and led to consecrate his life to most successful devotion to the Redeemer.

Plato, seeing a child do mischief, went and corrected the father for it.

Ver. 2, 3. *Mutations of life.* When one sea floweth, another ebbeth. When

one star riseth, another setteth. When light is in Goshen, darkness is in Egypt. When Mordecai groweth into favour, Haman groweth out of favour. When Benjamin beginneth, Rachel endeth. Thus we are rising or setting, getting or spending, winning or losing, growing or fading, until we arrive at heaven or hell.—*Henry Smith.*

Predestination. "If Jeremiah had fancied he was a prophet because there was in him a certain aptitude for uttering Divine discourses and foreseeing calamities, who can tell the weariness and loathing he would have felt for his task when it led to no seeming results, except the dislike of all against or for whom it was exercised,—still more when the powers and graces which were supposed to be the qualification for it became consciously feeble. Nothing but a witness, the more sure for being secret, 'thou wast marked and sealed for this function before thou hadst done good or evil; all thy powers are endowments to fit thee for fulfilling thy vocation, but do not constitute it; . . . it may produce nothing but pain to thyself and to those who are brought within thy influence; . . . still the words must be spoken, the acts must be done; for they are not thy words or thy acts;'—nothing but such a persuasion, written and rewritten in a man's heart, could sustain him against the conflicts, outward and inward, which pursue the true prophet."—*Maurice's "Prophets and Kings."*

Ver. 5. **Divine formation of a life.**

Fore-ordination. "*Propheta nascitur non fit.* A man is not educated unto a prophet, but originally formed for the office. Samuel declared a message from God to Eli when he was a little child. Note, God can, when He pleases, make children prophets, and ordain strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings."—*M. Henry.*

Children do not always reproduce their parents.

Origen had Christian parents, but Clement of Alex., and Justin Martyr were born and trained amid heathenism; rising like stars out of night. St. Francis of Assisi, again, had parents who were gross, brutal, and sordid; whereas he himself became one of the loveliest, holiest, and most self-abnegating of men which Christendom has known. Erasmus, also, the eminent Christian scholar, had a parentage whose history was one of sorrow, shame, and monastic bigotry; yet he rose to great usefulness and honour in the Church. Parentage does not always determine the character and career of the child.

Ver. 6. "*I am a child.*" *Lowliness of mind.* "Self-distrust is the first proof we give of having obtained a knowledge of ourselves."—*Zimmerman.* St. Augustine being asked, What is the first thing in religion? replied, Humility; and what is the second? Humility: and what the third? Humility. "Humility is the truest abstinence in the world. It is abstinence from self-love and self-conceit, the hardest and severest abstinence." "Humility leads to the highest distinction, because it leads to self-improvement."—*Sir B. Brodie.* "We must be little children in our own sight, in order to be prophets."—*Bishop Wordsworth.* God dwells with the humble.

"The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown
In deepest adoration bends;
The weight of glory bows him down
The most when most his soul ascends;
Nearest the throne itself must be
The footstool of humility."

—MONTGOMERY.

"*I cannot speak.*"

"Eloquence—a plague upon the word when we are talking of Jesus and of souls!—has no gift or benediction."—*F. W. Faber.*

"The sign-posts that point the way by the side of the road, never have a quotation of poetry upon them, or sentences from Isocrates or Sophocles. There is just the word, and that is enough."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Having heard Massillon preach at Versailles, Louis XIV. said to him, "Father, when I hear others preach, I am very well pleased with them; when I hear you, I am dissatisfied with myself?"

"Even the world honours consistency and courage, and the plainest speaker

will have, in general, the most hearers. The only part by which a bull can be safely taken is the horns."—*Power.*

Ver. 7. *Obedience.*

"Submit yourself to God, and you shall find
God fights the battles of a will resigned."
—BISHOP KEN.

"We can have no idea what we should be able to do if we were completely lost in accord with God; if we sought no will but His; if not a word of our mouths, not a beat of our hearts, not a thought of our minds, not a movement of our souls or bodies but were turned to Him obediently, in the spirit of Samuel, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.' There have been men who have shown what a man can do—a Luther, a Calvin, a St. Paul, a Moses—these men have shown what a man can do when he only seeks to obey the will of God."—*A. Monod.*

"Blessed is that simplicity which leaveth the difficult paths of dispute, and goeth on in the plain and sure path of God's commandments."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

Ver. 11. "*What seest thou?*" "Prophets have need of good eyes; and those that *see* well shall be commended, and not only those that *speak* well."—*M. Henry.*

"*Almond-tree.*" The rods which the princes of Israel bore were almond rods, at once the ensign of their office, and the emblem of the vigilance which became them as leaders of God's chosen people (Num. xvii. 6–8). Aaron's rod, that blossomed and yielded nuts, was an almond bough. The almond-tree has always been regarded by the Jews with reverence. Its fruit was among the presents which Jacob charged his sons to take with them on their second visit to Egypt (Gen. xliii. 11); and the ornaments of the golden candlesticks were made after the pattern of almonds (Exod. xxv. 33); and even to this day the modern English Jews on their great feast-days carry a bough of flowering almond to the synagogue. An allusion is made in Eccles. xii. 5, to the white or silver hair which, ere one is well aware, covers the head of old age.

"The hope, in dreams, of a happier hour,
That alights on misery's brow,
Springs out of the silvery almond flower,
That blooms on a leafless bough."

Ver. 11. *Visions.* Refer to Kebel's hymn for Septuagesima Sunday.

——"Earth is crammed with heaven,
And every common bush on fire with God,
But only *he who sees* takes off his shoes."
—UNKNOWN.

"And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."
—"*As You Like It,*" SHAKESPEARE.

Ver. 14. "*Out of the North.*" "The swelling waters of a flood are a usual type of an overwhelming calamity (Ps. lxix. 1, 2), and especially of a hostile invasion (Isa. viii. 7, 8); but this is a flood of scalding waters, whose very touch is death. The caldron represents the great military empires upon the Euphrates. . . The tide of passion and carnage is sure finally to pour itself upon Judea. The caldron looks ominously towards Jerusalem, but it has not yet overturned; and if Judah repent, God may make it exhaust its fury upon itself [Nineveh and Babylon being in conflict], or a defeat instead of victory at Charchemish may alter the whole tide of events. But if Judah remain impenitent, it must become the prey of whosoever conquers in the plains of Mesopotamia."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 15. *War.*

"'Twas man himself
Brought Death into the world; and man himself
Gave keenness to his darts, quickened his pace,
And multiplied destructions on mankind.

. . . . . .

"One murder made a villain [Cain],
Millions a hero [warrior]. Princes were privileged
To kill, and numbers sanctified the crime.
Ah! why will kings forget that they are men,
And men that they are brethren?"

. . . . . .

"Still monarchs dream
Of universal empire growing up
From universal ruin."—PORTEUS.

Ver. 17, 18. "*Be not dismayed.*" *Courage before kings.*

Said the Roman Emperor to Chryso-

tom, "I will *banish thee.*" "Thou canst not," was his answer, "for the world is my Father's house." "Then will I *kill thee.*" "That is not in thy power, for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will *deprive thee of all thou possessest.*" "Nay, for my treasure is in heaven, and my riches are within me." "But I *will exile thee,* that thou shalt not have a friend or companion left." "Neither canst thou do that; for my Friend is He who will never leave me, and from whom none can sever me. *I defy thee, proud emperor;* thou canst do me no harm at all!"—*From "Crowds of the Bible."*

When Polycarp was brought before the pro-consul, this officer addressed him: "Renounce Christ and I will release you!" Polycarp answered, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He hath done me no wrong; and how can I speak evil of my King, my Saviour?" The pro-consul replied, "I have wild beasts; to these I will cast you, if you change not your mind." But he boldly rejoined, "Thou *seemest not to know what I am;* hear me freely professing it to thee—I am a Christian."

"And how can man die better than facing
fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers, and the temple
of his gods."—MACAULAY.

"He holds no parley with unmanly fears;
Where duty bids he confidently steers,
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
And trusting in his God, surmounts them
all."—COWPER.

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology. Most probably in thirteenth Josiah, quickly after his call. Dr. Dahler (Stratsbourg) would interpose chapters iv., v., vi.; deferring this chapter till after them. But Hitzig sees in chap. ii. and iii. (where they think this discourse ends) all the characteristics of an inaugural prophetic deliverance; for "in its finished completeness it gives the impression of a first uttered outpouring of the heart, in which are set forth, without restraint, Jehovah's list of grievances against Israel." We may safely regard this as Jeremiah's earliest public utterance; its place must be within the thirteenth and eighteenth years of Josiah.

2. Cotemporary Scriptures, as in chap. i.

3. Historic Facts. Josiah engaged in his religious reformation of Judah. Auspicious advent of this discourse: for it was calculated to (*a.*) Animate the king and nation in rectifying desecrations and apostasy; and (*b.*) arrest the policy of the Egyptian party in Jerusalem who were urging alliance with that power (ver. 18).

4. Cotemporary History. Egypt rising into dominance under Psammeticus. In Jerusalem this event was hailed with satisfaction, as a counterpoise to Assyrian tyranny. Nineveh's downfall was approaching. This growth of Egyptian, and decay of Assyrian, power led statesmen in Judea to covet the friendship of Egypt (ver. 16, 18, 36). In consequence of Jeremiah's protest, it seems probable that Josiah's course became changed; he turned from hope in Egypt, and then rose in fatal resistance. See *Critical Notes,* chap. i., *Personal allusions,* 6. "*Josiah.*" The exact juncture of this chapter therefore seems to be when the king and counsellors of state were contemplating a protective alliance with Egypt.

5. Geographical References. Ver. 2 and 6. "*Wilderness,*" "*land of deserts and pits,*" &c. "A more frightful desert it had hardly been our lot to behold. The mountains beyond presented a most hideous aspect; precipices and naked conical peaks of chalky and gravelly formation, rising one upon another, without a sign of life or vegetation."—*Dr. Robinson.* "The whole country is made up of arid and barren plains, intersected by rocky mountains, amid the precipices of which are depths and caverns of the most horrid gloom."—*Henderson.* Ver. 7. "*A plentiful country;*" *lit.* a *Carmel land;* a beautiful garden like Carmel (comp. Isaiah xxxiii. 9, xxxv. 2). The name used metaphorically, and as an adjective, also in Isaiah x. 18, xvi. 10, xxxvii. 24. Ver. 10. "*Isles of Chittim:*" originally the name of the inhabitants of Cyprus; Phœnician colonists, who founded Citium on S.E. coast. Greeks called them Kittaei. The *Seventy* render Kittim by κητιοι, Ketii or Cetii. They extended commerce to all the islands and maritime coasts of the Mediterranean; to all which inclusively the name "Isles of Chittim" became applied. These *Chittæans* are here made to represent the peoples on the West. "*Kedar*" (son of Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 13). The *Kedarenes* were a pastoral people inhabiting the Arabian desert; but the name became extended to the Bedouins generally, who occupied the regions east of Palestine.—*Henderson.* Kedar thus represents the East. Ver. 16. "*Noph,*" called by Greeks *Memphis,* a few miles south of Cairo; the capital of Egypt in the time of the patriarchs, Pharaoh, and the Exodus. Situate just at that point of the Delta where the Nile separates into streams. As the residence of the court of the Pharaohs, it was the scene of Joseph's varying fortunes: chief seat of Egyptian literature and idolatrous worship: temple of Apis there, the most splendid erection in Egypt the pyramids stood close by—the sepulchres of the kings. "*Tahapanes,*" in Greek Τάφνας,

Daphne, the first Egyptian town on crossing the border from Palestine, about sixteen miles south of the flourishing seaport Pelusium, and on the margin of the Lake Menzala, thus enjoying facilities of traffic with the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. One of the palaces of the Pharaohs stood there (Jer. xliii. 9). Being one of the most influential cities of Egypt, it and the capital stood for the country and the government itself. Ver. 18. "*Sihor*," a Hebrew word = "the black," meaning the *Nile*, whose appearance is turbid when loaded with alluvial matter, and whose deposit is black soil. "*The river*" (of Assyria) means the *Euphrates*. Ver. 23. "Thy way *in the valley:*" a definite locality is designated; the vale of Hinnom. This runs along the south side of Mount Zion, and was infamous for the celebration of the horrid rites of Moloch (chap. vii. 31, xxxii. 35).

6. Natural History. Ver. 15. "*The young lions roared upon him*," &c. Never roars but when in sight of prey or when striking it down. Roar = signal of attack and consequent destruction (Isa. xxxi. 4; Amos iii. 4). Entire regions are sometimes depopulated by his fury (Jer. iv. 7). These are mystical lions; but the valour of a conquering tyrant and the rage of a savage lion work like effects. Ver. 21. "*A noble vine, a degenerate plant.*" Noble, properly *reddish;* a *Sorek vine*, producing red wine (Prov. xxiii. 31); a symbol of perpetual blessedness and bounty (Gen. xlix. 11). But Israel had become degenerate *branches;* not "plant," but sprouts or suckers; evil outgrowths of a good stock, like Deut. xxxii. 32. The noble vine of Palestine (Num. xiii. 23) yields clusters weighing ten or twelve pounds, and the grapes are like plums. Ver. 22. "*Nitre, soap.*" Nitre is the *natron* of Egypt, a mineral alkali found in the Nile valley after the water has evaporated. Soap, or potash, *Borith*, is a vegetable alkali obtained from the ashes of plants. These were the most powerful detergents known (*Speaker's Com.*). Ver. 23. "*Swift dromedary.*" בִּכְרָה, a young female, which has never yet had a foal. "Dromedary" is famed for amazing speed. Arabs affirm it will get over as much ground in one day as will take one of their best horses ten days. Hence used to carry despatches in haste (Esther viii. 10). Ver. 24. "*Wild ass, snuffeth up the wind.*" The *Onager*, of the mule kind (*Henderson*): "*accustomed to the desert*," = wild, reckless, ungoverned, obedient to nothing but *desire:* "*snuffeth up the wind*," *i.e.*, scenteth the male. Extremely swift, of slender form and animated gait. Mr. Morier, alluding to its peculiar cry with its nose (Jer. xiv. 6, ii. 24), says, "In crossing the desert we gave chase to two wild asses, which had so much the speed of our horses, that when they had got to some distance they stood still and looked behind at us, *snorting loudly with their noses in the air*" (*Journey through Persia*, quoted by Dr. Paxton)

7. Manners and Customs. Ver. 3. "*First-fruits of His increase;*" God's consecrated portion of the harvest (Exod. xxiii. 19). Ver. 13. "*Hewed cisterns.*" Tanks for rain-water, common in East in cities and along roads; wells are scarce. These cisterns become dilapidated, cracked; and in consequence the rain which falls, or water poured into them, sinks into the earth and becomes lost. "The Hebrews give the name *living water* to that which welled from a fountain, and flowed along, as if possessing the property of life."—*Henderson.* Ver. 20. "*Upon every high hill*," &c. Spots chosen for idolatries and the worship of nature (Deut. xii. 2; 1 Kings xiv. 23; Ezek. vi. 13). Ver. 32. "*Ornaments and attire.*" Oriental females wear profusion of decorations, rings, jewels, bracelets, &c. (*cf.* Isa. lxi. 10): "attire" here means *girdle*, sash, worn across the breasts (Rev. i. 13), often beautifully embroidered; an object of great pride to the wearer. Ver. 37. "*Hands upon thine head;*" the natural attitude of mourning (2 Sam. xiii. 19). "With hands clasped upon the head, Israel would retrace her steps, disgraced and discarded."—*Speaker's Com.*

8. Literary Criticisms. Ver. 2. "*Go, cry in ears of Jerusalem;*" a form of address implying his *absence from the city.* When he dwelt there the address assumed an altered form (chap. xvii. 19, xxxv. 13). "*I remember thee*," = of thee, to thy credit, for thy sake. "זָכַר with ל means to remember to one's account that it may stand him in good stead afterwards. *Cf.* Neh. xiii. 22, 31; Ps. xcviii. 3."—*Keil.* "*Kindness of thy youth;*" either Mine to thee, or thine to Me: God's generous regard and lavish privileges for Israel, or Israel's ardour and devotion to the Lord. The latter is preferable. Ver. 3. "*Was holiness.*" *Lange* renders it "a *Sanctuary.*" *Keil* favours this: "Israel was so shielded by Him, as His sanctuary, that whoever touched it must pay the penalty" (Ps. cxiv. 2). But *Bishop Hall, Henderson*, and *Speaker's Com.* = *an offering consecrated; Sharpe*, "*holy* unto the Lord" (*cf.* Exod. xix. 6, with Lev. xx. 24, Deut. vii. 6). Ver. 4. "*Families of the house of Israel;*" not Judah only, but all Israel inclusively, though ten tribes were dispersed; not merely the few members of those tribes still in Jerusalem, but an ideal audience, the whole nation. Ver. 12. "*Be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate;*" *lit.*, shudder and be withered away (*Lange*). An evident paronomasia—שֹׁמּוּ שָׁמַיִם. Impassioned personification: "Be horrified; be exceedingly aghast" at the monstrous spectacle. חָרֵב, to be parched up, deprived of vital force: devastated. "Places devastated have such an unsightly look."—*Maurer.* "*They have forsaken me*," *lit.*, Me have they forsaken; force in the initial pronoun, raising into prominence *Him* whom they have thus wronged. Ver. 16. "*Broken the crown of thy head*," = will feed down the crown (*Henderson*), depasture the crown (*Lange*); feed upon thy crown

(*Keil*). רָעָה, to eat up by grazing (Micah v. 5). *Gesenius*, "They devour the crown of the head." "The hair of the head being held in high estimation by the Hebrews, baldness was regarded as ignominious and humbling" (*cf.* chap. xlvii. 5, xlviii. 37). This fulfilled both in the sense of *depopulating* the land and *draining the resources* of the nation by taxation. "Shave thee bald," points to extreme devastation and misery (*cf.* Jer. xliv. 12). Ver. 17. "*Hast thou not procured this?*" &c., *i.e.*, Hath not thy forsaking Jehovah procured this to thyself? "*Led thee by the way;*" query, in *what way?* A distant *historic* way, in Arabian wilderness? (So *Speaker's Com.* and *Keil.*) But this would affirm that *their fathers' sin* in the desert originated the criminality which would eventuate in Judah's ruin. But *Kimchi, Hitzig, Henderson* = the right way, the way of holiness; not through the wilderness merely, but the course of moral training under the Mosaic dispensation. Ver. 18. "*To drink the waters*," *i.e.*, to draw from these sources, Egypt or Assyria, power and reinvigoration. Ver. 20. "*I have broken:*" many authorities reject the Masoretic punctuation, which makes the verb first person, and read "*Thou hast broken.*" If the A.V. stands, it = God's emancipation of Israel from Egyptian bondage. If "thou hast broken" be substituted, it = Israel's rebellion against God's rule. "*Thou wanderest*," &c.; stretchest thyself. "Under every leafy tree thou layest thyself down as a harlot" (*Speaker's Com.*), indicating her ready prostration before objects of idolatrous worship. Ver. 22. "*Thine iniquity is marked;*" is a stain, is ingrained; *i.e.*, a filthy blot which no acids, or devices, or remedies can purge. Ver. 23. "*Traversing her ways*," = rambling in her courses; "running in all directions in quest of a male."—*Henderson.* Ver. 24. "*Snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure;*" a symptom of excited passions (*Lange*). "*In her occasion*," &c., = as for her heat, who can repel it? (*Henderson*). *Keil*, "That in her lust panteth for air; her heat, who can restrain it?" "*All that seek her*," &c.: she will not hide from them, herself too ready to be found. "*In her month;*" at the pairing season. Ver. 25. "*Withhold thy foot*," &c. Cease this *wearing* and *feverish* rushing after idols; for only wounded feet and a dry thirst will ensue. "No longer undertake fruitless journeys to places of idolatrous worship, which wore out their shoes, injured their feet, and entailed extreme thirst."—*Henderson.* "God, the true Husband, exhorts Israel not to run barefoot, and with parched throat, like a shameless adulteress, after strangers."—*Speaker's Com.* Ver. 29. "*Wherefore will ye plead?*" = Why do ye, or to what purpose will ye, contend against Me? Their propensity to complain against God (see Exod. xvii. 2, 3, 7; chap. v. 19, xiii. 22, xvi. 10). Ver. 30. "*They received*," *i.e.*, they *accepted* no correction. Ver. 31. "*We are lords.*" רָדַד, = to ramble about in an unbridled manner; they had thrown off the reins, and wandered at will after idolatrous gratification (Hos. xi. 12). Ver. 33. "*Taught the wicked ones thy ways;*" either *taught idolatrous nations new idolatries*, or *taught thy ways wickedness*, *i.e.*, trained thyself to habits of atrocity. Ver. 34. "*Not found it by secret search.*" *Henderson*, = "by deep search, *i.e.*, atrocities have not been perpetrated in subterraneous caverns, as too horrible to bear the light of day, but openly in the valley of Hinnom, within the sacred precincts of the Temple, and about Jerusalem." "*But upon all these*," = upon all thy skirts. *Speaker's Com.* gives a wholly new interpretation, = *thou didst not find them* (the poor innocents) *breaking into thy house*, *i.e.*, they had committed no crime justifying violence. "By secret search," = *digging*, *i.e.*, digging through the walls of a house for the purpose of breaking into it. (*Lange* renders the words, *in the place of burglary.*) "*But upon all these*," = *because of all this*, *i.e.*, thou killedst the poor innocents, not for any crime, but because of this thy lust for idolatry. Ver. 37. "*Go forth from him*," from thence; "*not prosper in them*," have no success with them. Hastening to Egypt in hope of succour and strength, at a time when Nineveh is tottering before the armies of Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, thou shalt return repelled and forlorn.

HOMILETIC TREATMENT OF SECTIONS OF CHAPTER II.

Section 1–3. Beautiful retrospect—reciprocation of love.
" 4–8. Lamentable changes—violated faith.
" 9–13. Facts for amazement—reckless apostasies.
" 14–19. Looming disasters—outward results of impiety.
" 20–29. Baseness of idolatry—reflex degradations of impiety.
" 30–37. Affecting expostulations—incorrigible impenitence.

Ver. 1–3. Piety a Reciprocation of Love.

By Israel's "youth" is meant the period spent in Egypt and of the exodus thence (Hos. xi. 1, ii. 15). From the exodus till Sinai's covenant constitutes the season of plighted affection and betrothal (Exod. xix. 4–8). The bridal relationship was consummated there, and God was a Husband unto Israel from that hour (*cf. Keil and Hend.*). God emphatically calls Himself "the husband of her youth" (Joel i. 8), so tender, full of fond memories, sacred and intimate, was the union.

Query, whether here is meant Israel's love to God, or God's to Israel? *Chrysostom* originated the latter explanation; many still contend for it.—*Graff., Rosenm., Venema, &c.* But the accumulated decisions of interpreters favour the former. "The kindness (or grace) of thy youth," and "thy going after Me in the wilderness," can refer only to the bride. Yet who can think of the bride's love without instantly reverting to the higher, grander, vaster love of the Bridegroom? (See *Literary Criticisms* above, ver. 2.)

I. Love's origin and alliance. In the case of

i. *Jehovah's love for Israel*, it led to (1.) *Perception of excellencies:* "the grace of thy youth;" for although there was little to admire in Israel when in Egyptian bondage, or when released—a wild horde in the desert—God saw graces, appreciated "kindness;" for love is quick to perceive and admire. (2.) *Covenant of attachment:* "espousals;" the Lord drew Israel into plighted alliance; He must claim her all for Himself as His beloved. (3.) *Leading her forth into a new world and a new life:* "after Me in the wilderness;" a different but better scene than Egyptian degradation; life spent in the society of her Bridegroom; "all things become new."

ii. *Israel's love for the Lord* was (1.) *Ardent:* it was her "first love;" glowing, joyous, full of graces and kindness (*cf.* Exod. xxxv. 20–29). (2.) *Single:* she asked no paramour then, sought no "other lord,"—God was all-sufficient. "They saw no man save *Jesus only!*" (3.) *Unhesitating:* she ready to go anywhere "after" Him; even into "wilderness." His will was her law, her bliss. "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison and to death" (Luke xxii. 33). "Let us go also that we may die with Him" (John xi. 16). Such is the attitude of "first love." (See Addenda to chap. ii., "*Love of thine espousals.*")

II. Love's outgrowth and manifestation.

i. God's love was (1.) *Redeeming:* from Egypt, from enemies, from perils, from wilderness. (2.) *Disciplinary:* educating her and preparing her for higher position, nobler advantages, larger enjoyments and privileges. (3.) *Enduring:* through forty years in desert. (4.) *Unwearied:* never alienated or exhausted by all Israel's forgetfulness and failings.

ii. Israel's love was (1.) *Human*, therefore variable and perishable. (2.) Yet *trustful*, surrendering herself and her future to God. (3.) *Responsive*, going after Him, carrying out His precepts, though with many defects and even occasional disobedience. (4.) *Grateful;* for a religious regard and reverence characterised Israel's early career. Alas! she was sometimes also querulous.

III. Love's honours and blessedness.

Its object must be beautified and enriched; love ever acts thus.

i. *The Divine affection for Israel took delight in lavishing beauty and dignity upon its object.* (1.) It *robed Israel with sanctity* ("Israel" was holiness); invested her with national distinction and privileges. (2.) It *constituted Israel God's abode.* (See *Literary Criticisms*, chap. ii. ver. 3). (3.) *It secured to Israel Divine overshadowing* ("All that devour, . . . evil shall come upon them").

ii. *Israel's affectionate allegiance found expression.* (1.) *Her "first-fruits" were yielded to God:* this was the gift of her most prized possessions; it avowed that God was *first* in her thoughts, and first to receive the acknowledgment of her grateful love. (2.) *Her history witnessed for God*, made Jehovah known to surrounding nations; His character, mighty acts, supreme deity. (3.) *Her worship was a sweet savour to the Lord:* the Tabernacle services, the altar sacrifices, the gifts and offerings of the people, all were precious to Him—an oblation of love (Ps. lxxvi. 1, 2, lxxxviii., xlviii.).

Truly a beautiful retrospect. Piety flowing forth in love for God, in faith that worketh by love, in zealous attachment and lavish offerings and loyal devotion. God "*remembers*" it with delight. It is the garden of Eden, luxuriant and lovely, before sin's devastation blighted the fair scene. Alas! that on the sacred blessedness and beauty of "first love" could come so withering a blight!

Ver. 4–8. Lamentable Changes—Violated Faith.

(See Addenda, chap. ii. ver. 6: "*Neither said they, Where is the Lord?*")

The "*love of youth*" might be referred either to Jehovah or Israel; for early affection was reciprocal. But there can be no double reference of this dark fact—vows broken, love false, loyalty abandoned. God is incapable of inconstancy (James i. 17). It is only in man to deteriorate, to *forget* (what God "*remembers*," ver. 2) the "first love" (Rev. ii. 4, 5).

There should be a *reason* for all our courses of conduct; we could ordinarily *justify* our proceedings, in commerce, politics, &c. It should be so in spiritual as in temporal affairs. God here reviews Israel's career, sets sins in array, calls her to justify her conduct, *summons her to account*. Foreshadows this: "Every one must give account to God."

i. *A startling contrast* (ver. 5) between God's fidelity and their in-fidelity. ii. *An unanswerable challenge*. Their conduct was without reason. iii. *An appalling charge*. Asked not after God (ver. 6, 8), despoiled God's heritage (ver. 7), violated duty and knowledge (ver. 8). The guilt of backsliding stands out in vivid portrayal here. (Addenda, ver. 10, 11, "*Idolatry.*") Thus is shown:

I. That apostasy from God is wholly unjustifiable.

The question of its guiltiness remains in abeyance till the appalling *injustice* of it is proved (ver. 5). "What *iniquity*," &c. The word עַוֶל, *âvel*, stands opposed to צֶדֶק, *tsedek*, righteousness; and means perversity, wrongfulness; the contrary of good faith and truthful deed—*injustice* therefore: Ergo, their action was *unjustifiable*.

1. *Could they adduce any* provocations *to apostasy?* Had Jehovah *failed* to do what they might expect of Him? Had He *done* aught they could complain of? In any way had He been unkind, unfaithful, unjust? If so, they might justify their having "removed far from Him" (ver. 5). Let men charge God with wrong done to them individually if they can, and so prove their neglect and hostility reasonable and right. Against all *complaints* shall be set the grand *facts* of God's love, verity, and abounding grace.

2. *Had they derived any* advantages *from apostasy?* "Walked after *vanity*" (ver. 5); "after things that do not profit" (ver. 8). To lose the good and pursue an evil is a double loss, a twofold calamity. Losing God is a frightful loss; but losing Him means the surrender of all and failure of everything. A man hanging over a chasm lets go his only hold—a piece of projecting rock, to grasp shadows thrown across the perpendicular sides of the chasm: he clutches at vanity, and falls headlong to ruin. See Mark viii. 36, 37. Interrogate men as to the *substantial* "gains of godliness." The world will yield us at last *nought but a grave;* but "when heart and flesh fail, God will be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

II. That apostasy is felt by God to be a gross injustice.

It is unreasonable in itself, and equally undeserved by God. It is impossible to miss the fact that God *felt* their conduct. He does not regard it impassively; it occasions grief and calls forth sadness. Man's conduct affects God.

1. *Heartless ingratitude for favours* (ver. 6). Did not heed them; felt no sense of obligation for them; acted as if none had ever been shown them. Flagrant, insensate, graceless ingratitude. (*a.*) *They owed to God all their deliverances:* from Egypt (Micah vi. 4); oppression of Pharaohs (Exod. iii. 7); from pathless and inhospitable deserts; "land of pits," full of rents and fissures, and deep, waterless valleys, parched and unfruitful, of deadly terrors and dangers; of "shadow of death" (so Sheol is named, Job x. 21), utterly solitary, offering neither path nor abode for travellers. Instead of this heartless insensibility, we should say with David, "Bless

the Lord," &c. (Ps. ciii. 1–4). (*b.*) *They had received from God all their blessings* (ver. 7). They were nothing, had nothing, never gained anything by themselves or for themselves. "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" We are indebted to God for "all things richly to enjoy;" and for redemption, sanctification, and heavenly hope. "How much owest thou unto my Lord?"

2. *Base abuse of favours.* Never asked after the Giver (ver. 6, 8): prostituted their possessions to vile idolatrous uses (ver. 7), and handed God's "inheritance" over to traitorous rival deities (ver. 7). Frightful desecration. Comp. Rom. vi. 1; Heb. vi. 7, 8, x. 26–29.

3. *Glaring dishonour to God, who had put His glory in their charge.* Selected to show forth the praises of the Lord amid the nations, to be "holiness unto Him;" they had "defiled" and "made an abomination" (ver. 7) of sacred things. Can this be less than a gross injustice? Is not all sin a flagrant insult to God, a virulent outrage on the very purpose of our existence, a return of hate for wondrous love?

III. That apostasy is an offence of greatest criminality.

There may be an unconscious decline from religion, unintentioned. This bad, yet not defiant and designed. But

1. *Consider who they were who were guilty of it* (ver. 8). "*Priests:*" Chrysostom remarks, "See, the evil springs from the head." Had they done their duty, the apostasy had never become national. Their sin was heedlessness of their work. "They said not, Where is the Lord?" "*They that handle the law,*" = exponents of the Scriptures: the *preachers* of those days *ignored God*—"knew Him not." "The *pastors*," *i.e.*, shepherds, temporal rulers, civil magistrates (*Targum* renders it *kings*), these disobeyed and disregarded Jehovah's will. "The *prophets*, who should have listened to no voice, nor conveyed any message save Jehovah's, consulted Baal, chose an alien deity and a false inspiration (*cf.* Luke xii. 45–48). What is our case? Can we shelter ourselves by the plea of ignorance?

2. *Also their apostasy was deliberate and determined.* Positive act: "defiled," &c. (ver. 7). Negative act: "Neither said; knew not" (ver. 8).

3. *And equally insensate and insolent.* Turned persistently and flauntingly from God, and "walked after vanity." The Hebrew idiom, "things that do not profit" (ver. 8), means things baleful and pernicious (*Speaker's Com.*). Heed 1 Sam. xii. 20, 21. Hitzig points out a climax in the guilt: the ministers of Temple worship took no heed of God; the teachers of the law passed deliberately by the truths they knew; the civil powers actively disobeyed the law; the prophets deserted God entirely for a lying spirit. It is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord. What a fall from what Israel was! Begin to sin, and where will it end?

Ver. 9–13. Facts for Amazement—Reckless Desertion of the Fount of Life.

Comments:

The fidelity of *Jehovah* had been presented in contrast with Israel's inconstancy (ver. 5); now the fidelity of the *heathen* is adduced, for they never "change their gods" (ver. 11), although they are "no gods." How astounding, therefore, is Israel's guilt!

Though they might "consider diligently" (ver. 10), they would find no parallel. Yet they might justly desert gods who "do not profit" (ver. 11); whereas, God's "people" had abandoned that which was "their glory," without hesitation or remorse.

"כָּבוֹד, *glory*, is the glory in which the invisible God manifested His majesty in the world and amidst His people. God had shown His glory to the Israelites in glorious deeds of His omnipotence and grace, like those mentioned in ver. 5 and

6. The Baals, on the other hand, are *nothings*, phantoms without a being, that bring no help or profit to their worshippers."—*Keil.*

"Though the worship of the one true God is a nation's greatest glory, yet it is irksome because it puts a constraint on human passions doubly. For, *first*, it requires obedience to a law revealed from above; and, *secondly*, it endeavours to raise men to something higher than the mere level of human nature. Hence a true religion awakens an antagonism in man's heart, as naturally as a false religion pleases and soothes it."—*Speaker's Com.*

"*Be astonished, O ye heavens.*" "The greatness of the crime can be estimated by none so well as the over-arching heavens, which can behold and compare all that takes place."—*Lange.*

"These strongest terms in the language show how intensely amazed all the holy in heaven are at the monstrous folly of human sinning. That when men might have the infinite God for their friend, they choose to have Him their enemy; might have Him their exhaustless portion of unmeasured and eternal good, they spurn Him away, and set themselves to the fruitless task of making some ruinous substitute: this is beyond measure amazing! Verily, sin is the mockery of human reason!"—*Cowles.*

"The heathen are guilty of but one sin, idolatry: the covenant people *commit two*, in that they *abandon* the true God to *serve* idols."—*Speaker's Com.* "The sin is twofold: (1.) They do not obey the Lord; (2.) They will labour tooth and nail, if only they may not obey Him."—*Zinzendorf.*

"*Forsake the fountain,*" *&c.* "His people, who have the true religion, have the fountain: they can (1.) obtain water without difficulty; (2.) as much as they want. But they substitute means which are (1.) difficult; (2.) new; (3.) insufficient; (4.) deceptive; (5.) rejected on trial. Hence come the works of supererogation, the many ceremonies, ecclesiastical regulations, which are unquestionably *twice as difficult* as to follow the Saviour; and *they have no promise* for this life or the life to come."—*Zinzendorf.*

"What can quench the thirst of the soul? (1.) It cannot be quenched by drawing from the broken cisterns of earthly good. [Though the hewn cisterns please us better; and the cistern-water of this world is more to our taste than the living water, the living God and His Word.—*Hochstetter.*] (2.) It can be quenched only by drawing from the fountain of life, from which the soul originally sprang, even from God."—*Naegelsb.*

"The dead gods have no life and can dispense no life; just as wells with rents or fissures hold no water [and can yield none]. But living water, *i.e.*, that originates and nourishes life, is a significant figure for God, with whom is the fountain of life, *i.e.*, from whose Spirit all life comes. If man forsakes the living God, he passes, in spite of himself, into the service of dead, unreal gods. For, created by God and for God, he cannot live without God."—*Keil.* Hence the labour to substitute the loss.

Ver. 14–19. Looming Disasters—The External Result of Impiety.

Not only is it God's ordinance, but an inevitable and spontaneous law, that evil deeds work evil issues. To trifle with fire ensures burning; to desert friends involves desertion in turn; to wound Christ inflicts wounds on conscience; to turn from Him as those who "know Him not" (ver. 8), will issue in the doom "I know you not, depart!" (Luke xiii. 27).

I. God's free son in unnatural slavery through sin (ver. 4). The answer to the inquiries in an emphatic negation. Israel is Jehovah's first-born (Exod. iv. 22); how is it he has become a spoil? Fallen into the hands of oppressors.

1. *Not born to slavery*, as a serf of the soil or a child of enslaved parents. Liberty, spiritual freedom from tyranny, the birthright of man. We are none of

as born to thraldom to any spiritual adversary. If become slaves, because "sold our birthright."

2. *Not allowed to perish in bondage.* Ensnared in Egypt, the foe had them in his power, and bitterly oppressed them. Even as the "devil led us captive at his will" after we had yielded to his rule. But God redeemed Israel; us also.

3. *Yet enslaved again by the spoiler*, through wilful desertion of God, and "the last state worse than the first" (Matt. xii. 25).

II. Furious adversaries lurking for Israel (ver. 15, 16). Quick to rush down upon the prey who strays from safety. "Night and day, beasts of prey, lurking, are devouring." (See *Critical Notes*, chap. ii.; *Natural History*, ver. 15.)

1. *Envious of God's heritage* (ver. 15); for it is a heritage to be coveted (ver. 7). "These two nations shall be mine," &c. (Ezek. xxxv. 10).

2. *Thirsting for destruction.* "Your adversary walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter v. 8).

3. *Implacable in their fury* (ver. 15, 16). (See *Natural History* on ver. 15, and *Literary Criticisms* on ver. 16.) The devil "hath great wrath" (Rev. xii. 12).

III. When God is lost false remedies are sought (ver. 18). The previous verse shows *why* and *how* God was lost by Israel.

1. *Startling;* that Israel, once redeemed by God from Egypt, should be deserting God for Egypt! (2 Peter ii. 19–22).

2. *Admonitory;* for Israel was *not confident* of Egypt's sufficiency; the night-hag of doubt was on her heart; so she provided an alternative should Egypt fail—Assyria. Not satisfied or sure. Wicked have no assurance, no peace.

3. *Israel's substitutes for God.* These *rivers* (ver. 18) were to compensate the loss of "the fountain of living waters" Israel had forsaken. The Nile was the life-giving artery of Egypt; to drink the waters of Sihor therefore meant to procure for herself the resources of life which Egypt possessed. So with Assyria. For *what* do men forsake God? (ver. 11).

IV. Sinners are the occasion of their own overthrow (ver. 17–19). The confederacies they entered into were the agencies of their desolation (Prov. i. 31; Isa. iii. 9).

1. *They invite the enemy* by abandoning God. He was their defence; awed and restrained their foes. But like lions they crouch (ver. 15), ready to spring upon the prey which wandered exposed and unprotected. Sinners court destruction, tempt the tempter.

2. *They evoke God's judgments.* Though Divine punishments slumber—for God does not desire the death of a sinner, and is slow to anger—they awake at impious provocation (Rom. i. 18; Eph. v. 6).

3. *They necessitate the penalties of apostasy.* God has menaced all disobedience and defiance with dire penalties. "Now consider this," &c. (Ps. l. 22).

Application (ver. 19): "Know therefore and see," *i.e.*, at last comprehend, "that it is an evil thing and bitter," &c. Evil now and bitter hereafter. For "at last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder" (Prov. viii. 36). A gospel counterpoise (see Rom. v. 20, 21).

Ver. 20–29. Reflex Degradations of Idolatry.

Disasters come upon the impious from without, but the whole inward, personal, spiritual debasement which idolatry effected in the apostate was the greater calamity. Prostitution of the soul before idols, a more awful disaster than any external degradation. "O Israel! thou hast destroyed *thyself;*" the God-given nature, a wreck! Sin works a twofold doom—debasement and destruction. (For explanation of *words* and *similes*, see *Critical Notes* on chap. ii. above.)

"The sinful corruptions of humanity—(i.) Are not original (ver. 21); (ii.) But

very deep (ver. 22); (iii.) They cannot be denied away (ver. 23, 24), nor removed by external means" (ver. 22, 25).—*Naegelsb. in Lange.*

"How ruinous a course it is to trust in a creature! (i.) On account of his weakness he disgracefully leaves us in the hour of our need (ver. 26, 27). (ii.) We thus insult God and lose His help (ver. 28)."—*Idem.*

I. *From immemorial antiquity Israel had broken the yoke of the Divine law* laid upon her, and torn asunder the bands of decency and order which God's commands and ordinances put on her (ver. 20). "Bands" are not the cords of love with which God drew Israel (Hos. xi. 4), but the commands of God designed to keep her within the bounds of purity and from riot in idolatry. These broken (Jer. xxxi. 18; Hos. iv. 16).

II. *In this shameless prostitution to false gods Israel shows her utter corruption* (ver. 21); in her very nature as much as in her conduct.

III. *From the defilement of her sins, not even the most powerful means of purifying could cleanse her* (ver. 22). (See Isa. i. 18; Ps. li. 4, 9.)

IV. *Her degradation is the more deep in that she denies her base condition* (ver. 23). Though openly practising idolatry, she is blinded in self-righteousness. Her conduct is like irrational animals, yielding to sexual cravings. With unbridled desire she abandons herself to idolatrous lust (ver. 24).

V. *The summons to self-restraint defiantly resisted.* Advice is fruitless, for *I love the aliens* (ver. 25).

VI. *Disgrace and desertion in the evil hour will eventually follow Israel's sin* (ver. 26–28). Shame and confusion will ensue from the frustration of her hopes in false gods. And then to the living God whom she has long deserted she will make appeals in vain.

VII. *God will send transgressors, who seek Him in their panic, back to the gods for whom they rejected Him* (ver. 28, 29). Israel had gods enough (ver. 28); ought therefore to be satisfied and secure! Trouble will test Israel's hopes, and the worth of her idols. God will not accept any *pleading* (ver. 29), or regard "contention" from those who *ignored* and *deserted* Him in their "*day of salvation.*"—*Arranged from Keil.*

Ver. 30–37. Affecting Expostulations—Incorrigible Impenitence.

When man quarrels with God, the fault is always on the side of man (Ps. li. 6). For

1. God chastises us, but we do not obey (ver. 30).
2. He bestows on us vast blessings, yet we do not adhere to Him (ver. 31).
3. He makes us partakers of the highest glory, yet we reject it with disdain (ver. 32).—*Naegeb.*

An unjust imputation repelled by Jehovah (ver. 31). To an ingenuous mind God never appears so irresistible as when He addresses His creatures in the language of tender expostulation. Christians treat God as a wilderness—

1. When they are reluctant to serve Him.
2. When they seek their happiness in the world [away from God]. The ground of complaint is in them, not in Him.—*Payson.*

Who is it thus vindicates His own character? Jehovah Himself. Answer the challenge given and the charge brought against you.

I. His appeal in answer to charges brought against Him.

[For ver. 29 shows Israel chiding (not pleading) with God.]

1. *Was He to the Jews a wilderness or a land of darkness?* Rescued them *from wilderness* (ver. 6). Himself met their every want, and gave them full and peaceful possession of the promised land (Deut. xxxii. 10–14; Neh. ix. 21–25).

2. *Has He in His conduct to us deserved any such humiliating imputation?* We

passing through wilderness: lacked ye anything? "No good thing withhold." Given Son, Spirit; shown kindness and care. Charges against His liberality altogether false (Isa. v. 3, 4).

II. *God is vindicated;* but hear His charge against you. He complains, and justly, of—

1. *The flagrancy of man's rebellion.* Israel, = "We are lords," &c. (ver. 31). You also affected *independence.* Satan's temptation. "Ye shall be as gods" (Gen iii. 5). Independence is the very essence of the Fall (Rev. iii. 17). Shown ourselves proud, daring, impious, self-sufficient rebels.

2. *The contemptuousness of man's neglect.* "Forgotten Him" (ver. 32) after all His mercies. *We* have forgotten—(*a.*) Our obligations to Him. (*b.*) Our dependence on Him. (*c.*) The great account we have to give Him. By our engrossing attention to trifles (ver. 32) we "provoke God to jealousy."

(*α.*) *Refrain from vindicating yourselves* (ver. 35); Hos. v. 5; Isa. xxviii. 5. Ponder the assertion (Prov. xxviii. 13).

(*β.*) *Humble yourselves for your guilt.* Then be encouraged, for God's goodness was Israel's hope (Deut. vii. 7, 8), and His love and mercy avail you (Isa. i. 18). —*Rev. C. Simeon, M.A.*

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON SELECTED VERSES OF CHAPTER II.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* AN UNFORGOTTEN PAST. *Text:* "*I remember thee.*"

As we advance in life—

1. We *may,* as Israel did, *leave the best things we once possessed in the rear.* We may acquire more outward substance; Israel did (ver. 7); may amass more, yet we may lose our early sweetness of character, ardour of piety, sanctity of conscience. And

2. We commonly *do lose all recollection of those better days.* We allow them to die from thought; perhaps helplessly so: it may be we prefer it should. There is a pang in memories of days when we *were* better, though we *had* less.

I. **The unfading memory of God.** "*I* remember."

Not only as a *necessity* that a mind which is infinite should be incapable of forgetting, but as a *voluntary* and *intentioned act.*

1. *Our habits are forgetful.* The past glides from us, will it or not. Much of the good which the past held, and of the good we did, fades from recollection; and alas! much of the evil becomes lost to memory. Each wave of time rolling in upon the shore obliterates the former wave. What obliterations occur in life! What erasures from memory!

2. *Yet no part of our life is lost.* Gone from us, and from our recalling, but not from God. Nothing we have been or done fades from the mind of Jehovah. All things lie in His imperishable thoughts. "God is not unrighteous *to forget*" either the good or evil which the past contains; else how could He judge our years, and recompense our life?

3. *He remembers our life in its religious aspects.* For that is the only cognisance God takes of our existence. Though He cares for us and ministers to us temporally, as to Israel (ver. 6, 7), He regards our life in its *spiritual* bearings, estimates its religious qualities, looks for the *moral and sacred elements,* not the mere material accidents of human existence. We may think much of our *affairs;* God, of our condition; we, of our circumstances and experiences; God, of the state the soul is in and the aspects of our life religiously What does God think of our past?

II. The memory of God lingers fondly over what is good in our life.

There are persons with keen recollections of unkindly and condemnatory incidents; their memories are storehouses of corruptions. Morally, they have *bad* memories. The *morbid* remember all that is evil of themselves; the *malignant,* all that is evil of others.

1. *The Divine memory is benignant* (ver. 2). "I remember thee," is literally *to thy account.* God keeps the good of our life in thought:

a. For its own sake. He loves everything good. Too precious, and alas! too scarce, to be allowed to slip from thought.

b. For our sake. He loves us for the good; it makes us dearer to Him; it is His seal upon us, "His image and superscription" (1 Tim. ii. 19).

2. *The good of our life may all lie in the past.* It did with Israel. The time of "youth" was the best time. Alas! "her goodness was as the morning cloud and the early dew, which goeth away." Had God limited His attention to the present state of the nation, what a changed order of things! (ver. 11–13). Oh, sad that so full a blossoming should issue in such barrenness and dearth. "Our youth" is too often the purest and brightest era of our life. Let the *mature* compare themselves now with themselves then. Nothing sordid, grasping, subtle, withered, defiled; but manhood and womanhood, how deteriorated and devastated! Let the *aged* review the promise of youth.

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing *boy;*
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows;
He sees it in his joy:
The *youth*, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended:
At length the *man* perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."
—WORDSWORTH.

If, therefore, God is to remember sincere goodness, He must look to our early years. How generous and gracious He who seeks not our sins, but our few poor, short-lived virtues!

III. The memory of God lingers over the good of our life for our advantage.

1. *Not that a past religious life can exonerate present sinfulness.* It did not Israel: nor can it deliver any soul from the consequences of degeneracy (Ezek. xxxiii. 12, &c.).

2. *Yet it allures the Divine tenderness and grace* (Mark x. 20, 21).

3. *And God does not lightly esteem the fact of our former relationship of love with Himself.* He loves still, though we may have declined. He yearns over the child though a prodigal, and would fain reinstate him in His grace. God is specially pathetic and pleading with those who have formerly been His. He cannot reconcile Himself to their alienation and loss.

4. *If any return to their first love, He will remember to their account all the zeal and attachment they formerly showed.*

How encouraging this to spiritual delinquents! "Come, and let us return to the Lord," &c. (Hos. vi. 1–4).

Ver. 2, 3. "Every important historical appearance has its paradise or *golden age*, as now with Israel (ver. 2, 3). It is thus with *humanity* in general, with the *Christian Church* (Acts. ii. 41—iv. 37), with the *Reformation*, so also with *individual Churches* (Gal. iv 14) and with individual *Christians.* This period of first nuptial love does not, however, usually continue long (Rev. ii. 4).

I. *The joyous period of first love.*

1. In experience extremely precious.

2. In duration relatively brief.

3. In effect a source of everlasting blessing.

II. *The nuptial state of Christ's Church in its stages.*

1. The first stage, *love.*

2. The second stage, *alienation.* (Addenda to chap. ii. 2.)

3. The third stage, *return.*

III. *The covenant of Christ with His Church.*

1. Its *ground*, election.

2. Its *condition*, faith.

3. Its *promise*, the Church an indestructible sanctuary.—*Naeg. in Lange.*

Ver. 1–13. *Theme: The evil nature of that sin which is committed after our conversion to God.*

Four things observable which aggravate the offence:

I. *Committed in violation of solemn vows and covenant engagements.*

Conversion is a *marriage*, wherein Christ resigns Himself, with all He is

and has, to us; and we resign ourselves, with all we are and have, to Christ. "Thy vows, O God, are upon me."

The love we then bore to Him = *the love of our espousals.* At that time we took Christ's cause for our cause, His people for ours, His will for our law, His glory for our end, and Himself for our portion. Did we love Him too well then? If prince espouse poor outcast, give himself and all he has to her, only requiring her heart in return, shall she refuse him that, grow first dissatisfied, and go after other lovers? "O my soul! thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art *my* Lord."

II. *Departures from God have been without any provocation whatever on His part* (ver. 5).

This question ought to open every spring of sensibility and self-abhorrence.

1. *Was He wanting in forbearance* when we were in rebellion?

2. Did He *act unfeelingly* when we were ruined, in that He gave His own Son to die for us?

3. Has He been a *hard Master* since we entered His service? *Himself* ever a wilderness to us, or *obedience* a barren path?

4. Has He been a *churlish* Father to us? Ever refuse us free access, or give us a stone?

5. When we have returned to Him with our whole heart, has He not always been *ready to receive us, and bury all in forgetfulness?* (Dan. ix. 7).

III. *Sins after conversion show peculiar and horrible ingratitude* (ver. 6–8). God has not done the self-same thing for us as for Israel; but

1. He has given, not Egypt or Ethiopia for *our ransom*, but His own blood.

2. Has *redeemed* us, not from Egyptian thraldom, but "from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."

3. We never *supported by miracles* in lonesome deserts of Arabia, but "having obtained help of God, we continue."

4. Did not *possess Canaan*, but "God hath provided some better things for us."

Our blessings abundantly transcend theirs, and lay us under far greater obligations. To have slighted and dishonoured a God of such love as this is indeed the greater sin.

IV. Such departures from God are *expressive of the most extreme and singular folly* (ver. 9–13).

We should so judge of a people who removed their tents from an overflowing fountain and settled in a parched desert, there to trust to hewed cisterns.

1. It is an *exchange*, and a foolish one; of liberty for drudgery, peace for remorse, joyfulness for anguish, abundance for penury and misery.

2. It is *singular* folly (ver. 10, 11). Israel, the only people in the world having a God worth cleaving to, must be the only people desiring a change. The people of the only true God alone prove untrue!

This not more extreme and singular than *our* folly when we shun God and fly for happiness to sensual and carnal gratification.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Ver. 5. *Theme:* HEAVEN'S APPEAL TO THE SINNER.

I. **The sinner is Divinely described.** "They are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity."

1. *Sin is departure from God.* Alienation of sympathy and soul.

2. *Sin is a progress of vanity.* "An idol is nothing in the world" (1 Cor. viii. 4). Everything about a sinner's life is vain. Sin is going from the real to the unreal.

(1.) The pleasures he seeks are unsatisfactory; all empty, and outside him.

(2.) The honours he aspires to are unreal; neither enrich nor ennoble the soul.

II. **The sinner is Divinely challenged.** "What iniquity found in Me?"

1. *Implies that if iniquity were found in God, there would be some justification for apostasy on the sinner's part.*

2. *That the discovery of such iniquity is an absolute impossibility.* There are three revelations of God, and each shows Him of absolute perfection.

(1.) *Nature.* Reflected in the universe, God is perfect.

(2.) *Biography of Christ.* Perfect grace, perfect truth.

(3.) *The moral soul.* They declare God is perfect. All men feel bound to love Him; indicates innate belief in His perfection.

No being in the universe can find iniquity in God. Could hell find it, its agony would be mitigated, if not removed.—*Homilist.*

Comments:

Ver. 8. Since priests, pastors, and prophets, who have been regularly inducted into office, may be deceivers, it is necessary to try the spirits according to the criterion given in 1 John iv. 1, *sq.*—*Lange.*

Ver. 9. Their ancestors, themselves, and their descendants, constitute a unity—(1.) In moral guilt. (2.) In persistent backsliding. Ergo, (3). In consequent penalty.

Ver. 11. "*Changed their glory.*" (See Addenda to chap. ii. 11.) "Gods no gods."

1. Israel had *no glory*, dignity, or renown *of her own* (Deut. vii. 7).

2. She had *derived from Jehovah all the glory* she ever possessed (Deut. iv. 32–38).

3. *God Himself was Israel's crown of glory* and beauty (Ps. cvi. 20; Rom. i. 23).

4. The Shekinah, shining upon and filling with splendour the sanctuary, was *the glorious symbol of God's presence with Israel* (1 Kings viii. 11; *cf.* Rom. ix. 4).

5. *Idolatry* endeavoured to *materialise that ethereal symbol of God: golden calf* (Exod. xxxii. 2–5), glittering, brilliant!

6. The substitution of *profitless* idols for Jehovah *surrendered all Israel's glory*, and left her *baser* than when God found her (Deut. xxviii. 15–29).

Ver. 12, 13. *Theme:* TWO ASTOUNDING EVILS. (See *Literary Criticisms*, ver. 12.)

To forsake God does not mean departure from His *presence* nor escape from His *rule*, but *moral alienation* of soul.

I. The force of human freedom.

Mightiest rivers cannot break from their source, nor greatest planets from their centre, but man can from centre and fountain of his being.

1. *This freedom is a matter of personal consciousness.* This is the invincible and ultimate argument *re* human responsibility; men *feel* they are uncoerced and free.

2. *This freedom invests human existence with transcendent importance.* Makes them members of the great *moral* empire of the universe.

II. The enormity of human wickedness.

1. What *ingratitude.* 2. What *injustice.* 3. What *impiety.*

III. The egregiousness of human folly:

1. *In withdrawing from the satisfying to toil for the unsatisfying.*

2. *In withdrawing from the abundant to toil for the scanty.* Well may the heavens be "*amazed* and *horrified*" at the freedom, iniquity, and folly which they witness every age and every day, developed in the history of our race.—*Homilist.*

Comments:

Ver. 14. *Eichhorn* thinks the prophet here proposes to Judah, as yet spared, the *case of Israel* (the captive ten tribes), as a warning of what they might expect if they confided in Egypt: "Was Israel of meaner birth than Judah? Nay; yet if Israel fell before Assyria, could Judah hope a better fate from Egypt?" But the two parts of the nation are *not separated* in the prophet's thought and address (*cf.* ver. 13, 18, 36).

It is an inquiry: How comes it that the nation which is *not* a slave by birth, being "Jehovah's son, His firstborn" (Exod. iv. 22), is to suffer the miseries of slavery?

Speaker's Com., however, renders it: If Israel is a slave, he is *home-born*, and hence held in respect (Gen. xiv. 14), may expect kindness as well as protection. Cannot Jehovah guard His own household? How happens it that a member of so powerful a family is spoiled? Next verse gives the reason: Israel is a *runaway* slave, deserted the family to which he belonged; hence his trouble and misery. By leaving his master's house he has *exposed himself*

to the beasts of prey in the wilderness (ver. 15).

Theme: ISRAEL'S SLAVERY AN EMBLEM OF THE UNIVERSAL HUMAN SLAVERY OF SIN.

1. In both it is not original. 2. Is self-incurred. 3. Is severely punished. 4. The punishment is the means of salvation (since it shows sin is ruinous, and godliness is life and peace).—*Naegelsbach.*

Ver. 16. "If God wishes to chastise His people, He usually employs the ungodly for this purpose (Deut. xxviii. 49, 50); and it often happens that injury and destruction come upon the ungodly from those from whom they have promised themselves the greatest help."—*Starke.* (See *Literary Criticisms*, ver. 16.)

Ver. 17. *Theme*: RECKLESS DESERTION OF THE RIGHT WAY.

Suggests a *retrospect.* Look well over your life and mark your career; the points at which you forsook God. Suggests also a *calamity.* How are your present misery and terror to be accounted for? Examples: Youth with wasted constitution. Merchant suddenly bankrupt. "Brought it all on himself." Man is too ready to blame others, emphatically God, for his misfortunes. Text finds the cause of our *personal, social,* and *spiritual* disasters nearer home.

I. There is a gracious way wherein Jehovah leads.

Through Arabian desert went with Israel. But a *way of life* is meant.

1. This may not approve itself to the unregenerate.

2. Yet it is a path of pleasantness and holy joy to the godly.

3. Along it the footsteps of God, the presence of Emmanuel, are realised and enjoyed.

4. Attended by the Lord Himself he pilgrim traverses this living way, which leads away from bondage into blessed privilege and eternal rest. (See Addenda to chap. ii. 17.)

How blessed, and safe, and favoured that life which has Jesus ever with it *all the way;* the life which is ordered so as to please Him, and never lead *Him to depart;* a loyal career of piety and love!

II. Man betrays a fatal refractoriness, and deserts the gracious way. Youth, though trained in "wisdom's ways," forsakes them for sin. Even religious persons turn aside from the Lord and wander. Hence:

1. *The criminality* of those who desert God. "The Lord *thy* God."

2. *The circumstances* under which refractoriness asserts itself. "*When* He led thee." Not when God seemed distant or angry.

3. *The course* which this refractoriness pursued. "Thou hast *forsaken* the Lord." Not fell back in the way because it was difficult to follow; but an entire and wilful leaving the path for another.

III. Sinners accomplish their own overthrow by their wilful impiety. "Thou hast procured this for thyself." (See *Literary Criticisms*, ver. 17.)

1. *The way led from evil to good* (ver. 6, 7).

2. *Outside the way perils and foes lurked* for "prey" (ver. 15).

3. *Leaving the way forfeited God's guidance and protection.*

4. *The end of transgression is doom* (Matt. vii. 13).

Ruin is *entailed*, not sent; doom is the natural issue of evil; the guilty perish as the inevitable outcome of wrong. They had, therefore, to "bear their own iniquity," and to blame themselves for their woes (Ezek. xxxiii. 11).

Ver. 19. *Theme:* SIN ITS OWN PUNISHMENT.

I. *In the dealings of God with good men.*

1. Neglect *secret* devotion, and God will refuse His blessing on other means of grace.

2. Indulge *secret* sin, and God will bring that sin into open light and condemnation.

3. Idolise created good, God will take from us our idol, or make it a plague to us.

4. Act with faithlessness to others, God will permit us to suffer from the

treachery of others; as Jacob's subtlety with Esau came back in Laban's treatment of him.

5. Undutifulness to parents punished by the defiance of our own children.

6. Indifference as to home piety returned upon us in the irreligion of those in the home. Eli's sons.

II. *In the dealings of God with wicked men.*

1. Those who resent religious persuasions and strive to stifle conviction are deprived of godly parents and friends, and left to a fatal peace.

2. Those who repel the Gospel because of its humiliating truths are allowed to "believe a lie and be damned, because they have pleasure in unrighteousness."

3. In death and judgment, the punishment of the sinner will reflect his sin. He who had said to Christ, "*Depart*, I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways," will hear his own word again, "DEPART!"

The essence of misery in that world will consist in recollection. Then will "our wickedness reprove us."

Application: How dreadful a thing sin is in all its operations! He who indulges in it kindles a fire that will burn himself. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

There is no radical cure but contrition and the Cross.—*A. Fuller.*

i. The nature of sin: *forsaking the Lord as our God.*

ii. The cause of sin: *because His fear is not in us.*

iii. The malignity of sin: it *is an evil and bitter thing.*

iv. The fatal consequences of sin: forsaking the Lord = *without God.*

v. The use and application of all this: repent of thy sin.—*M. Henry.*

Ver. 20. I. *The sacred yoke of God.* (See Addenda to chap. ii. 20, "*Yoke.*")

1. The Lord's yoke is easy (Matt. xi. 29); yet

2. It seems intolerable to our flesh; nevertheless

3. Heartrending sacrifices and sufferings are the substitutes we procure for ourselves in its stead. Children given to Moloch, and infliction of self-torture (1 Kings xviii. 28). This, rather than renounce carnal freedom and bow to the chastisement of the Spirit.

II. *The sacred yoke refused.* The endeavour to cast that yoke off:

1. An ancient one. The angels' revolt; man's fall; Israel's apostasy.

2. A ruinous one. For (*a.*) It deprives us of true freedom; and (*b.*) It renders us the servants of powers hostile to God and destructive to ourselves.—*Arranged from* LANGE.

Ver. 22. *Theme:* FUTILE SELF-CLEANSING. (See *Critical Notes, Natural History*, ver. 22; and Addenda to chap. ii. 22, "*Iniquity is marked.*")

I. Sinners make vigorous efforts at external cleansing.

1. Driven thereto by remorse or apprehension.

2. Under a powerful impulse towards improvement; or

3. As a compromise with conscience; balancing inward evil by outward good.

II. Approved and promising means may be adopted. As here:

1. *Rationalism* prescribes its "nitre" of *culture* and *respectability.*

2. *Sacerdotalism* recommends its "soap" of confession, penance, gifts to the Church, vows of chastity, &c.

3. *Self-righteousness* urges more "washing," tithes and phylacteries, and prayers; that "the outside of the cup and the platter" may be clean; "*for the Pharisees wash oft.*"

III. All this without any true appreciation of holiness. For that would denote loathing of sin and of self, which God accepts, and is the beginning of redemption.

1. *Israel was not resolved on purifying herself.* There was much ado about reformation, cleansing Temple, because Josiah was resolute; but she still loved sin (ver. 25).

2. *The outward effort is impotent when without heart.* There may be ostentatious vigour, but it is the *inward* longing and purpose which give effect to action. "The Lord looketh not on outward appearance, but searcheth the heart."

3. *Cleansing without holiness is self-*

deception and abhorrent. It is the devil's piety, a whited wall, a delusion to man, and detestable to God (Luke xvi. 15).

IV. Therefore the guilt remains deep and immovable.

1. For the sin itself is not superficial, but inherent.

2. Superficial cleansing does not touch the seat of evil. "For out of the heart proceeds evil," &c.

3. Till sin is loathed it cannot be removed. It is incarcerated within us, protected against remedies.

4. It thus lies under God's eye an indelible stain.

Let the "soul *abhor itself*, and *repent* in dust and ashes;" and lo! there stands ready a Saviour, "the propitiation for our sins," "mighty to save;" who, if the sinner will but cry to Him, "Lord, save, I perish!" will answer, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee!" "*Though your sins be as scarlet*," &c. (Isa. i. 18).

Ver. 23. *Theme:* WHAT HAST THOU DONE? *Text:* "*See thy way in the valley; know what thou hast done.*"

God undertakes to expostulate with His people. He finds them priding themselves on, and surrounding themselves with, an edifice of self-righteousness, a refuge of lies.

How does God confute this self-righteousness? By simply pointing to bare fact. The prophet takes Israel up to the summit of the hill, and points down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, to the sight of all those idolatrous emblems and monuments scattered profusely there. God lays hold of Israel, as it were, and says, "How canst thou say, I am not polluted? See thy way," &c. Those stones cry out against thee, those smouldering fires down there, through which your children passed, are indications of the guilt which has brought darkness and judgment down upon the nation.

I challenge you to take a general view of your past life. "See thy way; know what thou hast done."

1. Look at your life *in the light of God's Divine purpose.* God sent you into the world with a noble destiny; to reflect His glory and scatter heavenly blessings. He gave thee a *body* to be a temple of the Holy Ghost: what hast thou done? Desecrated that sacred shrine. Gave thee an *intelligence* to know Him; but He has not been in thy thoughts: a *heart* to glow with Divine love; but it only glows under the blighting breath of sin.

2. *In the light of your social position, and the circumstances by which you have been surrounded.* God has given some position, wealth, business: what done with it? God asks it, but you return Nabal's answer (1 Sam. xxv. 11).

3. *In the light of the responsibilities of the domestic relationship.* God has made you a member of a family. Parents, negligent of souls of your children, concerned more for their social prospects, is prayer ever heard among your children? What hast thou done? Trained thy children for hell.

4. *In the light of your relationship to the best and tenderest of fathers.* What done to your Father in heaven? Prodigal son. That is how God's mercy is treated; waste Divinely-given substance in selfishness and sin. What hast thou done? Turned thy back on thy Father's love, spurned His offers of mercy, and deafened thine ear against His call.

5. *In the light of the tender dealings of the Holy Spirit of God.* You can remember in childhood and youth how that Spirit strove with you. In those early days there was, at times, a strange overshadowing, a Voice that seemed to say, "Come!" It was the Holy Spirit who longed to win you. What hast thou done to that Holy Spirit of God? "Ye do always *resist the Holy Ghost.*"

6. *In the light of your relationships with Him, who, because He loved you, was content to hang as your substitute upon the cross of shame.* I plead for Him. I hold Him up crucified before you. What hast thou done to that *blood* of His? Infatuated Jews cried, "His blood be on us and our children!" and it fell as showers of judgment. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" Have you taken home to your heart the

message, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" and looked up with eyes of gratitude to your Saviour's face, and said, "O my Saviour! *Thy blood was shed for me,* for *me,* for *me?*"—*Aitken.*

Ver. 24. *Theme:* SELF-VINDICATING SINNERS REPROVED.

Circumstances under which we sin aggravates the guilt. *Mercies* received by us; *resolutions* they have prompted; *degree* of our degeneration; all are marked by God. But one evil transcends all others, a self-justifying spirit; this is pre-eminently offensive to the Divine Majesty.

I. The self-vindicating ways of sinners.

It might be supposed that, when men's iniquities are so visible, they would fall under the accusation and humble themselves before God. Instead, they justify themselves against the charge: some

1. *In a way of direct denial;* as Cain (Gen. iv. 9, and text).

2. *In a way of vain excuse;* as Saul (1 Sam. xv. 13–15).

3. *In a way of hypocritical palliation;* as Adam and Eve (Gen. iii. 11–13).

II. God substantiates His charge against His offending people.

However we may justify ourselves, God will set before us the things that we have done (Ps. l. 21):

1. *By an appeal to fact.* "See thy way in the valley; know what thou hast done." Not discovered by "secret search" (ver. 34); it is done without concealment. So, look at *your whole lives,* one continued scene of rebellion against God. All your *very religion* a shadow, full of shameful unreality and slips. What palliations can exonerate?

2. *By a most apt comparison.* (See *Critical Notes, Natural History, Literary Criticisms,* above; also Addenda, ver. 23.) Dromedary and wild ass, when seeking their mate, are so bent upon attainment of their desire, that efforts to catch them are vain; no one will weary himself with so fruitless a labour. But when their time of pregnancy has advanced they fall comparatively an easy prey to the pursuer. So to little purpose that you are followed with invitations and entreaties: you "will not hear voice of charmer, charm he never so wisely."

Application: There is a time when we may hope to prevail over sinners. "In *her month*" (ver. 24). Happy if you have become "weary and heavy laden" with your sins, and will be led back to God. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" (iii. 13). Come burdened to Jesus, and He will "give you rest" (1 John i. 8, 9).—*Simeon.*

Ver. 25. Comments.

Schmidt interprets the words "*Withhold thy foot,*" &c., as being led barefoot away into captivity, the penalty of apostasy. *Hitzig* thinks the reference is to penances performed barefoot to idols, and the thirst the result of vociferous invocations. *Eichhorn* regards it as referring to idolatrous acts, viewed as those of a lewd person, who both exposes herself and cries out for paramours. *Umbriet,* = God entreats Israel as His bride to refrain from rushing like an adultress, barefoot, and with parched throat, after strangers.

The natural meaning: Abstain from incontinence (idolatry); do not so shamelessly pursue lovers, nor thirst after sexual intercourse. (See *Literary Criticisms* on ver. 28.)

"*There is no hope,*" &c. "The plea of *despair* is not half honest; it is taken up as an apology for rushing madly and headlong into sin."—*Cowles.*

Ver. 26. If "*kings and princes*" are authorised to determine a nation's religion, and "*priests and prophets*" to lord it over individual conscience and judgment, why, then, this people was not to blame. Piety, if left to their imperious care, would soon fall into a lamentable plight. Let each man be his own "king" and "priest" *religiously;* "be fully *persuaded in his own mind,*" and act as he knows God requires.—(See Addenda to chap. ii. ver. 26, "*Kings and priests.*")

Ver. 27. "*Trouble*" is a fine self-revealer, and a faithful witness for God. Pleasure and prosperity act on men as opiates, lull and befool them; but affliction and trouble are quick restoratives; they

bring men to their senses. (See Addenda to chap. ii. ver. 27, "*Trouble.*")

Ver. 28. 1. Shame is the only gain of impiety; it eventually covers us with confusion.

2. Subterfuges for God will be an encumbrance and a torture to us when we find out our stupidity and their uselessness.

3. We shall want a helper to "arise and save" in the evil times which are coming. May our hope not make us ashamed!

4. Necessity teaches men to pray; but it is a desperate thing to be calling upon "vanities" in the day of our dismay.

5. God may send back pleaders to their cherished delusions. Then will they know themselves as "having no hope, and without God in the world."

Ver. 30. "*In vain have I smitten you.*" God deals two different strokes, one for *grace*, another for *justice;* to save, or to afflict; to convert, or to make sinners know their crime.

The *smiting* was by God's *prophets*, whose words are the "rod of His mouth," and fall with different effects on men, according as they "hear or forbear," proving a "savour of life" to some, and "of death" to others.

This smiting by the prophets with "the sword of the Spirit" was answered by their smiting the prophets with the material sword of slaughtering revenge (1 Kings xviii. 13; Neh. ix. 26; Matt. xxiii. 37). (See *Literary Criticisms*, ver. 30.)

1. To *accept chastisement*, sent by word or deed, is a sign of wisdom (Prov. viii. 10; *cf.* Heb. xii. 9).

2. To *profit by it* requires that we enter into the Divine purpose and respond (Heb. xii. 5, 10). (See Addenda to chap. ii. ver. 30, "*Correction.*")

Ver. 31. "Where God bestows most benefits, there He receives the least gratitude."—*Förster.* God is "a *desert*" to none. This is true—1. *In reference to all men* (comp. Matt. v. 45). (*a.*) He regards their bodily wants. (*b.*) He provides for and seeks their spiritual good. 2. He was always *a fruitful land to Israel.* (*a.*) When He blessed them and punished the heathen. (*b.*) When He blessed the heathen and punished them. (*c.*) Even when He allowed the Church of Christ to pass from the Jews to the heathen.—*From Homilies on Jeremiah, by Jerome, quoted in Lange.*

What an attitude of graceless defiance and antagonism this for man to assume! 1. We *refuse the Divine control completely.* "We are lords," *i.e.*, ramble unrestrained. 2. We are *determined never to return to the Lord.* "We will come no more unto Thee." It is an idle boast. (1.) *None can escape God's control* (*cf.* Acts xvii. 28; Heb. ix. 27) (2.) *Every soul must come back to God* (Rom. xiv. 10–12). Who then shall stand before Him? (See *Literary Criticisms*, ver. 31.)

Ver. 32. (See *Critical Notes, Manners and Customs*, ver. 32.)

1. The world's trifles are esteemed more than God's graces.

2. Adornment of the person engrosses more time and thought than enriching the soul.

3. God receives worse treatment from frivolous worldlings than their paltry trinkets. They preserve and prize them; but "God is not in all their thoughts."

Ver. 33. Fine irony. *How good thou makest thy way! = amendest* (*cf.* chap. vii. 3, 5), in order to gain love. To succeed in wickedness, to live immorally, necessitates no little study, self-accommodation, and effort. Evil costs more pains than godliness, and requites with penalties.

Ver. 35. "*Obstinate impenitence.* (1.) It is blind to its own guilt. (2.) Blasphemes God by accusing Him of unjust anger. (3.) Will not escape just punishment."—*Naeg. in Lange.*

i. Self-justification. ii. Delusive hope. iii. Divine testing. iv. Certain refutation.

Ver. 36, 37. *Fear, defeat, failure.*

I. Fearful lest her confidences should fail, the soul anxiously multiplies human reliances; "gaddest about *so much* to change her way;" to make sure of *Egypt* when Assyria seems declining.

II. Dishonoured by this desertion of Him for other "confidences," God will defeat her human hopes. "The Lord hath rejected thy confidences" (*despised*

them); "thou shalt not prosper in them."

III. All contrivances to prevent herself being left desolate issue in overwhelming failure and shame. "Thou shalt go forth from him" (from thence), "thine hands upon thine head." (See *Critical Notes, Manners and Customs*, ver. 37.)

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER II.

Topic: EARLY PIETY THE BEAUTY OF YOUTH. *Text:* "*I remember the kindness of thy youth*" (ver. 2).

Introduction. The sacred grace of bygone days made Israel lovely in God's remembrance. The religious earnestness of the young ruler secured for him this—"Jesus looking upon him, *loved him.*" Young lives consecrated to the Lord are sure of Heaven's approval and blessing. (See Addenda, chap. ii. ver. 2, "*Piety the beauty of youth.*")

I. A picture of a beautiful youth.

A portrait hangs on your wall; you say, "A lovely face!" But something more beautiful and valuable than "good looks." What? The character, virtues, life. *God* would not estimate by *looks*, appearance. He wants "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." See what Scripture says about appearance as compared with the inward spiritual qualities (1 Pet. iii. 4). Israel's youth had *not been vitiated by sin;* it was given up to God in its freshness and beauty. Shall yours be? God says of it that it was—1. *Full of kindness* (to Him). 2. *Secretly loving and clinging.* "Espousals: went after me." Jesus asks each, "*Lovest* thou me?" "*Follow* me."

II. An eye that fondly gazes on it.

What loving eyes, of mother, father, look often on that portrait on the wall! "*I remember thee.*" God could not draw His gaze off from that picture of Israel's early piety. Oh, how God lingers with eyes of tender regard over each youthful life, specially over those who are early His! "I love them that love Me, and those who seek Me early shall find Me." 1. *God had Himself formed and graced this youth with beauty.* He was a Father to Israel, and all her loveliness was derived from Him. So all our goodness is His gracious work. 2. *God cherished Israel as being peculiarly precious* (Deut. vii. 6–8). Oh, what *hopes* a father entertains about his child; what *love* he lavishes!

III. A special desire to preserve it.

Nothing, no one, must be allowed to injure that much-prized portrait. So God laid penalties against all who should touch or damage Israel (ver. 3). For—1. *There was no equal in the world.* All the world was idolatrous, but "Israel was holiness." Think what it must be for an only child to be lost. God does not want to lose you, *i.e.*, your youth, your piety. He asks that your religion be preserved. It is an incomparably precious jewel. Your character is the best thing about you; that gone, you are nothing to God. 2. *It could not be replaced.* Youth once gone never can be recalled. *Youthful piety* cannot be recalled once lost. You may return to God *later in life*, but the best part of you would then be wanting. A flower with its leaves falling off is not so beautiful as the opening bud.

IV. A dreadful peril threatening it.

Precious things always seem most in danger. A portrait not valued would never get damaged; but that one precious thing, why, everything seems to threaten it. There are dreadful perils menacing a godly youth. 1. *Offensive enemies* (ver. 3, "offend") 2. *Numerous enemies* ("*all* that devour"). 3. *Destructive enemies* ("devour"). Remember him who "seeketh whom he may *devour*" (1 Pet. v. 16; *cf.* Matt. xviii. 6, 7). Think how Israel was spoiled (ver. 14). We need the preserving care of Jesus. He can keep us in safety, and guard our souls from the spoiler (1 Tim. i. 12).

Topic: DISTRUST OF GOD ISSUING IN DESERTION. *Text:* "*My people have forsaken Me, and hewed out cisterns*" (ver. 13).

"Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers;
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all."

Let distrust begin, it will widen into alienation. It may be small at outset, a "little pitted speck" in the ripe fruit of our faith, a mere *doubt* of God's promises; but the leak has sprung, the fire has started, the poison has entered the blood. The "speck" spread, "rotted inward," and "slowly mouldered all." This is the principle of the text, *the growth of unfaith*, the ultimate issues of distrust of God.

Not applicable to those who have never loved and trusted God; but to "My people," who had experienced enough to ensure their fearless love. We have known fuller demonstration of Divine sufficiency and grace in Jesus in our personal redemption and adoption. In us "perfect love should cast out fear." Yet doubt has been cherished, and has issued in desertion.

I. A fact for amazement: *God was theirs, yet they deserted Him.* "Be astonished, saith the Lord." It is a cry of amazement from God. "O ye heavens!" peopled with myriads of holy ones, did ye ever know such a wrong done to your faithful and gracious King? Silence your songs; "be horribly afraid;" for what may *not* ensue, now that "My people" can act thus?

1. *There is overflowing plenitude in God.* "*Fountain;*" spontaneously, from indwelling resources, giving forth streams: "*living* water;" unceasing, never stagnant, always fresh and refreshing: "living *waters;*" many streams, diverse and multiplied, suiting every taste, slaking every thirst.

2. *It is God's purpose that we should find our all in Him.* (*a.*) Human thirst is God's work in us. (*b.*) Thirsts are implanted within us to lead us to God for supply. (*c.*) We may therefore be satisfied fully, and can be satisfied alone in Him. Did our faith never falter, "we might ask what we will and it should be done." Sad that we have let "unfaith" come in; and, in our want of faith, have sought to provide substitutes should God fail!

II. An effort of compensation: *Having forsaken God, they constructed for themselves laboured contrivances.* Withdrawal of faith from God does not better us, but beggars us; not set us at rest, but drives us to wearying toils. Having lost our good in God, we wander piteously, crying, "Who will show us any good?" See how this works:

1. I become *perplexed.* God bids, "If lack wisdom, ask of God." Instead of going to Fountain, "committing my way and trusting in Him," I seek counsellors; but they do not agree, and perplex me the more. "They hold no water."

2. I am *in grief;* heart aches for consolation. I might "lean on Jesus' bosom;" but hard thoughts drive me to avoid Him. I seek human words of comfort, and they fall on my ear—vapid, succourless. "Miserable comforters are ye all!" "They hold no water."

3. The Church *droops;* numbers minish, agencies fail. We must get a more earnest pastor, more effective preacher, make our services more attractive! So popular preacher comes, sensational services are arranged, week-night entertainments planned. But can these bring the "Breath of the Lord"? "They hold no water;" and the spiritual life of the Church is parched and perishing still.

4. When persons lose vital godliness, they often grow valiant sectarians and doctrinal bigots—their tenets are their "cisterns;" or they substitute punctilious observances for spontaneous piety.

(*a.*) Man has the power to construct promising appliances. (*b.*) He makes toilsome efforts to satisfy his soul in dearth; but thus saith the Lord, "Wherefore labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me." A voice from the Gospel age speaks, "If any man thirst, come unto Me and drink!"

III. A desolating failure: *Man's toilsome devices prove of no avail.* "Broken;" for God is not careful to preserve them (ver. 37). Better "broken" than that we should be sustained by delusions.

1. Men have left God for *pleasure.* Issue: "The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone."

2. For *success.* Issue: "All vanity and vexation of spirit."

3. Turned from Jesus *to culture.* Issue: "O wretched man that I am," &c.

4. From Bible to *rationalism.* Issue: "Leap in the dark."

Content yourselves with God. We are not to be creators but recipients. Shut door of your hearts on "unfaith." Keep near Fountain. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!"

Topic: GOD NO BARREN WILDERNESS. *Text:* "*Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness?*" (ver. 31).

In the text there are three general parts considerable: a demand, an expostulation, and an invitation.

I. A demand. "Have I been a wilderness," &c.

i. It hath the force of a *remonstrance* or protestation, *i.e.*, I have *not* been so. Not a "wilderness," which is an expression of *unprofitableness;* not "a land of darkness," which = *uncomfortableness. Theme:* That God's people do not serve Him in vain and for no profit; neither are they losers by their servings of Him. This is evident from daily experience and observation; and it is founded upon God's royalty, nobleness, and magnificence. Men are wrongly opinionated respecting God, and the reasons are:

1. Because God is pleased sometimes to suspend and delay the expressions of His goodness to them.

2. Because God does not always reward them in that way and kind as they desire and expect from Him.

ii. It hath the force of a *remembrance* or seasonable intimation, *i.e.*, I have been the *contrary*, I have in reality been a *paradise.* It is an ironical inquiry suggesting the very reverse, intimating God's great goodness and overflowing bounty. *Theme:* That God takes care of His Church, and provides all things necessary—means of illumination and instruction, means of fructification and increase. His providence works wonderfully for it, keeping it from enemies, preserving it from dangers and destruction.

The more God does for any people, the more He expects from them. Their *thankfulness* is to be answerable to His mercies, and their *obedience* to their thankfulness.

iii. It hath the force of a *reproach* or implicit exprobration, *i.e.*, Israel hath rather been a wilderness *to Me!* And so it represents to us the unfruitfulness of God's people. Three things aggravate this unfruitfulness:

(1.) The *mercies* which they enjoy. (2.) The means (of improvement; advantages) they partake of. (3.) The *expectations* which are upon them; for God had occasion to expect fruitful returns. It is a sad thing to be under the upbraidings of the Almighty, for there is certain to be occasion for it when *He* reproaches.

iv. It hath the force of an *appeal* or provocation to them, *i.e.*, let Israel speak what they know of Me. God here submits Himself to the judgment of their consciences. He challenges them to say the worst of Him. This is grounded upon His own innocency. Thus He justifies all His dispensations with His people; for if they consider, they must acknowledge that His ways are equal and theirs unequal (Ezek. xxviii. 29). In His goodness to His whole Church in general, and to our own persons in particular, God has approved Himself to our consciences by manifold expressions.

II. An expostulation. "Wherefore say My people, We are lords, we will come no more unto Thee?"

I. The *charge;* it is twofold:

1. Their *assertion;* "we are lords," whereby they hold forth their own greatness, self-sufficiency, and independence. When men will be their own masters, and do what they will without control, God suffers them to be so, and gives them up to liberty. But this is the greatest misery in this world; for with our nature corrupted by sin we need One *better than ourselves* to guide and restrain us.

2. Their *resolution;* "we will come no more," &c., which is a twofold sin—(*a.*) The *denial* of their *address.* This refusal to come showed *disrespect,* want of due affection for God; for when men come not at God, it is a sign they do not love Him nor regard Him as they should: *ingratitude;* for they had received so many kindnesses from God, that His mercies should have provoked attendance upon Him: *stubbornness;* resisted even God's call and persuasion. Ahasuerus took ill Vashti's refusal to come when commanded. Yet God has invited us often by the ministry, Providence, and Spirit. (*b.*) The *discontinuance* of address, "no more come," which denotes their *self-sufficiency* and their *apostasy.* "We are lords," and can shift for ourselves.

ii. The *censure,* "*wherefore?*" which signifies that

1. It was *without reason;* they had no cause at all for it; God had given them neither occasion or provocation.

2. It was *against reason.* Consider their *relation*—"My people." What an unnatural thing for them to refuse to come near God! And their *indebtedness;* kindness is a strong engagement; love constrains response; yet here it was all restrained and reversed.

III. An invitation. "O ye generation, see ye the word of the Lord!"

By "generation" he meant the people of the time. There is a *reflection* in the phrase upon the sinfulness and wretchedness of the age, as if to say, Into what a time and age are we fallen! Here then consider:

Unto what this generation is invited. "To *see* the Word of the Lord," *i.e.,* mind it and attend to it. They had *heard* the Word often, but it had done no good; now called to "see" it.

The *weightiness* and seriousness of it in its twofold bearing—1. As it respects *God's* own *justification,* "Have I been a wilderness?" and 2. As it respects *Israel's condemnation,* "Wherefore say My people," &c.

What improvement have *we in this generation* made of our favours? Have we shown *faithfulness* and *fruitfulness?* God has been no "*wilderness*" to us: have we to Him? No "*darkness,*" for the light of truth and the Gospel shines around us: have we "walked in the light"? Have we waxed *proud and self-confident,* saying, "We are lords"? &c. Certainly the abominations which in these days abound speak loudly against us. If so, it is most unreasonable. And God calls us to repentance and amendment of life.—*T. Horton, D.D., London,* A.D. 1678.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER II. ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 2. "*Love of thine espousals:*" its Divine origin:—

"Yes, love indeed is light from heaven,
A spark of that immortal fire
With angels shared, by Alla given,
To lift from earth our low desire.
Devotion wafts the mind above,
But heaven itself descends in love;
A feeling from the Godhead caught,
To wean from self each sordid thought;
A ray of Him who formed the whole,
A glory circling round the soul."
—BYRON.

Ill-requited:—

"A mighty pain to love it is,
And 'tis a pain that pain to miss;
But of all pains, the greatest pain
It is to love, and love in vain."
—COWLEY.

"*I remember thy youth.*" "The retrospect on youth is too often like looking back on what was a fair and promising country, but is now desolated by an overwhelming torrent. Or it is like visiting the grave of a friend whom we

have injured, and are precluded by his death from the possibility of making him an atonement."—*J. Foster.*

Piety the beauty of youth.

"What is beauty? Not the show
Of shapely form and features. No!
These are but flowers
That have their dated hours
To breathe their momentary sweets, then go.
'Tis the stainless soul within
That outshines the fairest skin."
—SIR A. HUNT.

"*Naturalists* inform us that Oriental pearls are generated of the *morning dew.* That field is full of the richest corn which is cleansed of its noxious weeds in the *spring.* Jesus was carried in triumph upon a *colt,* the foal of an ass." —*Secker.*

Ver. 6. "*Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us from Egypt.*" *Ingratitude.* "Philip, King of Macedonia, caused a soldier of his, that had offered unkindness to one that had kindly entertained him, to be branded in the forehead with these two words: *Hospes ingratus.* Unthankfulness is a monster in nature, a solecism in manners, a parodox in divinity, a parching wind to dry up the fountain of further favour." —*Trapp.* The Dead Sea drinks in the Jordan, and is never the sweeter; and the ocean all rivers, and is never the fresher; thus, we take all God's mercies with insensibility.

Ver. 10, 11. "*Nation changed their gods.*" *Idolatry.* "We perceive, as much from the words of the prophet as from the history, that this idolatry has now become deep and radical. The state of mind latent in them is . . . the utter incapacity for acknowledging a God not appealing to the senses, which Jeremiah discovers in his contemporaries. He boldly sets up the faith of the heathen as a lesson to the Israelites." —"*Kings and Prophets;*" *Maurice.*

"A long course of sin was needed so to deaden and blind the heart of man as to make idolatry possible. Age after age gave in its contribution, . . . so that, besides the original sin of each man, there was a sinful tradition of mankind. . . . Every generation bequeathed to the next a further measure of declension from God."—*Dr Manning.*

Ver. 11. "*Gods which are yet no gods.*" At Buhapurum, a child about eight years old, educated in Christian faith, was ridiculed on that account by some heathen persons older than himself. "Show us your God," said they. "I cannot do that," answered the child, "but I can soon show you yours." Taking a stone, and daubing it with some resemblance to a human face, he placed it upon the ground, and pushing it towards them with his foot, "There," he said, "is such a god as you worship."— "*Dictionary of Illustrations;*" *Dickenson.*

Ver. 17. "*He led thee by the way.*" *The blessed pilgrimage.* "Faith is the rod with which he cleaves Red Seas of difficulty; and God's Word is a pillar of guiding light amid the rocks of a sandy wilderness; and Sabbaths are wells of water; and Ordinances are beautiful and shady palm-trees; and Prayer brings down manna every morning; and the sight of the Cross heals the bite of fiery serpents; and Hope is a spy going beforehand to bring back the clusters of Eshcol; and God's presence is, at the last, as the ark in the midst of the river; and the pilgrim passes dry-shod into 'the land that floweth with milk and honey.'"—*J. Stoughton.*

Ver. 19. "*Thine own wickedness shall correct thee and reprove thee.*" *Sin its own punishment.* "Look for the man who has practised a vice so long that he curses it and clings to it; that he pursues it because he feels a great law of his nature driving him on towards it, but, reaching it, knows it will gnaw his heart and tear his vitals, and make him roll himself in the dust with anguish."— *Sidney Smith.*

When Nicephorus Phocas had built a strong wall about his palace for his own security in the night-time, he heard a voice crying to him, "O Emperor! though thou build thy walls as high as the clouds, yet, if sin be within, it will overthrow all!"

Ver. 20. "*Yoke.*" The yoke was laid upon the neck of the beast, and fastened with thongs to it and to the plough-beam. It thus symbolised slavery or severe rule (as Egyptian), while breaking it suggested welcome deliverance

Breaking the yoke equally represents the rejection of authority, as in this verse, and chap. v. 5.

Ver. 22. "*Thine iniquity is marked.*" Let a blot lie a while on a pure sheet of white satin paper; try to remove it. Erasure may ultimately rid the sheet of that "one dark spot," but the *paper is injured*, the *satin gloss is gone*, and if you try to write on the place again, *the lines smear*. Sin effects permanent injury, cannot be removed by most careful efforts; the "*mark*" remains when all is done. *Holiness* is not mere cleanness; it has *no mark* of injury. It is pure light; the concentration of all the prismatic colours into unity.

Ver. 23. "*Swift dromedary.*" "The camels of the Bible are of two kinds, the difference being the result simply of breeding and training. The first kind, used as a *beast of burden*, will carry from 500 to 1000 pounds twenty-four miles a day. The second, used to *convey intelligence*, will travel upwards of 100 miles in twenty-four hours; this kind is called the dromedary."—"*Topics for Teachers;*" *Gray.*

Ver. 26. "*Kings and priests.*" No *human authorities* to dictate our religion. One of the ancient fathers replied to a clamorous disputant who shouted "*Hear me, hear me,*" "I will neither hear *thee*, nor do thou hear *me*, but let us both hear Christ."—*Dictionary of Illustrations.*

Ver. 27. "*In the time of their trouble,*" &c. The armies of Media and Lydia were in violent conflict on the 30th September, B.C. 610 (while Josiah was occupied in reforming Judah), when suddenly, to them, occurred an eclipse of the sun, known as Thales' eclipse. It overwhelmed both armies with such terror that they gave up the contest, and peace was negotiated and settled in the camp. Happy if the eclipse of trouble, suddenly coming upon us when we are at war against God, should lead us to cease a life of antagonism, and sue for peace.

Ver. 30. "*In vain have I smitten your children, . . . correction.*" Mr. Cecil observed in the Botanical Gardens a pomegranate-tree cut almost through near the root, and asked the gardener for the reason. He explained that the tree used to shoot so strong as to bear only leaves; but now that it was nearly cut through, it began to bear fruit well. Alas! that affliction on man should be profitless, when nature accepts it and turns it to account.

"The *good* are better made by ill,
As odours crushed are sweeter still."
—ROGERS.

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology. **Exact date of chapter uncertain.** It naturally divides itself at ver. 5, although Dahler, Umbriet, and Neuman contend for the unity of the chapter as a single prophecy. Doubtless there is a continuity of imagery and reasoning (ver. 1, 8), but the inscription to ver. 6 is a difficulty, and their transference of that inscription to ver. 1 is unwarranted. "The Targum," Vulgate, Jerome, Rosenmüller, Wordsworth, and Henderson regard ver. 1–5 as a separate and complete prophecy, and plead that the abrupt commencement "to say" or "saying" (ver. 1) is not without parallel (Judges xvi. 2), and indicates a Divine message. But Luther, Kimchi, Maurer, Hitzig, Starke, Keil, and "Speaker's Commentary" connect ver. 1–5 with chap. ii. as a completion of that prophecy, and read thus: "The Lord hath rejected thy confidences," &c. (ii. 37), "*saying*, If a man," &c. (iii. 1). This is preferable.

Ver. 6 onwards to vi. 30 gives a lengthy prophecy, forming either one prolonged address (*Hend.*) or a condensation into one uniform whole of a series of addresses (*Keil*) delivered during Josiah's reign.

Date of ver. 1–5, the 13th of Josiah; date of ver. 6 *sq.*, 17th of Josiah (*Maurer*); *before* the 18th, the year of Josiah's great reformation (*Hend.*); *after* the 18th (*Bayster, Blayney*, &c.). M. Henry gives the date B.C. 620, *i.e.*, the 21st year of Josiah.

2. Cotemporary Scriptures. With iii. 6 to vi. may agree 2 Chron. xxxiv.–xxxv. 18; Zeph. i. iii.; 2 Kings xxii.–xxiii. 25; Nahum and Habakkuk.

3. Historic Facts. Josiah, personally journeying through Judah and Israel, continues his purification of the nation; returns to Jerusalem in his 18th year, immediately repairs the Temple for the restoration of Jehovah's worship therein. Judah's ostentatious return to Jehovah a solemn mockery (ver. 10). (Comp. B. p. 61, "*Actual State of Judah.*")

4. Cotemporary History. During these six years, Nabopolassar rebels against the king of

Assyria, becomes king of Babylon, and thus founds the Babylonian empire. Cyaxares (Ahasuerus, Dan. ix. 1) succeeds Phraortes on the Median throne, and begins to make Media a great power (B.C. 625). Psammeticus continues to reign over Egypt at Nineveh.

5. Geographical References. Ver. 12. "*Towards the north*," *i.e.*, to Mesopotamia, Assyria, Media, where the captive ten tribes were located by Tiglath-Pilesar (B.C. 740; *cf.* 2 Kings xv. 29, xvi. 7–9; Amos i. 4, 5), and Shalmanezar, or rather Sargon, his son (for Assyrian monuments show that Shalmanezar died during the siege of Samaria, and that Sargon carried Israel captive), *cir.* B.C. 720; *cf.* 2 Kings xvii. 6, xviii. 9–11. (Comp. A. p. 60, "*Facts re Outcast Israel.*")

6. Natural History. Ver. 3. "*Latter rain*," *i.e.*, the vernal rain, which fell about April, perfecting the harvest; the "former" rain came early in November, preparing the earth for cultivation. (Comp. C. p. 62, "*The Land Withered by Drought.*")

7. Manners and Customs. Ver. 1, 8. "*Divorce.*" The law found in Deut xxiv. 1–4. The "bill" was a legal document; it guaranteed legal cognisance of, and justifiable reasons for, the husband's deed. Ver. 2. "*The Arabian in the wilderness.*" The Bedouin lurking and eager for plunder; thus did Israel look out for idolatry as for booty.

8. Literary Criticisms. Ver. 1. "*Yet return again to Me.*" "Targum," Jerome, and A. V. regard וְשׁוּב as the imperative. Keil renders it as interrogative, "Wouldst thou return to me?" as being forbidden. "Speaker's Commentary" takes the verb as an infinitive; "And to return to me!" that is, *And* thinkest *thou to return to Me!* "Israel could no more take her place as wife." Henderson says it is the infinitive absolute, and as such may be used as an imperative. Lange gives as the sense, "Although, in accordance with legal regulations, I ought not to receive you, yet I say, Return to me." Certainly ver. 14, 20, 22, and iv. 1, bear out Lange's sense of the words. (See on ver. 14 below.)

Ver. 5. "*Behold thou hast spoken*," *i.e.*, fairly, used devout speeches to Jehovah; but actions have contradicted words; "and hast *done* evil as thou couldst." *i.e.*, without self-restraint. *Noyes*, "doest evil with all thy might." *Calvin*, "with incorrigible persistency."

Ver. 7. "*Her treacherous sister*" should be rendered, "*and Treacherous, her sister*," as being her appellative. Falsehood, Faithless—not an adjective, but Judah's name.

Ver. 9. "*Lightness*," as if קַל were the infinitive of קָלַל, *levity*. It is rather derived from קוֹל, *a cry, noise*; the tumult of her idolatrous revelries. Some take it as the *cry* which rose to heaven against her; but it is here said to "*have defiled the land*;" therefore "her riotous orgies" is the more correct.

Ver. 12. "*Turn, thou backsliding*;" lit., "*turn* thou that hast *turned*." Note the paronomasia שׁוּבָה מְשֻׁבָה. "*Not cause mine anger to fall.*" *Lange*, "not lower my face against you." *Keil*, "not look darkly upon." *Hend.*, "not continue to frown."

Ver. 14. "*I am married unto you.*" בָּעַל. *Hitzig, Umbriet*, I will be your *lord, master*; suggestive of severe domination. *Hengstenberg, Lange, Keil*, "your husband:" for Jehovah had been, and would ever be, that to Israel. *Kimchi, Rosenmüller, De Wette, Gesenius, Henderson* contend for the signification, *loathing*, disdain: "I have *rejected you*," since both here and xxxi. 32 is taught that God had abandoned Israel in consequence of her stubborn apostasy. The A. V. is consistent with the prevailing language of this chapter (see above on ver. 1). *Jerome* translates, "quia ego vir vester."

Ver. 16. "*Neither shall that be done any more*," *i.e.*, the Ark being lost, no effort would be made to replace it. "Neither shall it be made any more." (Comp. D. p. 62, "*The Ark Lost.*")

Ver. 19. "*But I said, How*," &c.; not "but," as if it were a difficulty; *and* "*how* shall I." The sentence need not be taken interrogatively, but *How gloriously will I*: with what honours! "*Of the hosts of nations*; lit., *beauty of beauties*: צְבִי צְבָאוֹת, not "hosts." The Hebrew idiom means a heritage of the *chief beauty* of nations.—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 21. "*For they have perverted*;" rather "because" supplying the reason of their weeping, the burden of their grief.

Ver. 23. "*Truly in vain from the hills*," &c. *Umbriet*, "Verily a lie is from the hills, tumult of the mountains." *Lange*, "As certainly as the hills are false, and mountains an empty sound." *Keil*, "Truly the sound from the hills, from the mountains, is become falsehood." "The Targum" gives as the sense, Delusive and profitless were our idolatrous observances upon the heights. The word הֲמוֹן is rendered the "noise of revelry" in Amos v. 23: and here = "the noisy gatherings for idle worship on the hill-tops."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 24. "*Shame*," וְהַבֹּשֶׁת; lit., *the shame, i.e.*, Baal; comp. chap. xi. 13, where the word לַבֹּשֶׁת is rendered "*that shameful thing*, even altars to Baal" (*cf.* Hos. ix. 10). *Gesenius* = "an idol which deceives the hope of the worshippers, and puts them to shame." *Calmet* says:—"The Hebrews, instead of pronouncing the name of Baal, of which they had a dread, used in its place the name 'Bosheth'—shame, confusion. Thus: Mephi-Bosheth, for Mephi-Baal."

Ver. 25. "*We lie down*," *i.e.*, prostrate ourselves in abasement, abashed at the memory of our disgraceful deeds.

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER III.

Section 1–5. The verdict of law and the appeal of love.
" 6–11. Israel's divorce: its lessons lost upon Judah.
" 12–14. Israel invited to renew her marriage by repentance.
" 15–20. Restoration to lost spiritual privileges open to both Israel and Judah.
" 21–25. Their penitential return to the Lord their God.

Ver. 1–5. The Verdict of Law and the Appeal of Love.

Judah, by her idolatry, had broken her marriage vows to God. Her consequent rejection has not been declared by Jeremiah, but ver. 1 implies it. She is spiritually divorced from her Husband. God has "put away His wife." A solemn truth: sin breaks off our relationship with God. The sinner may have "many lovers" (ver. 1), but he is "without God;" how will he do, then, on whom call, in calamity, death, judgment? "Return" is indeed desirable, if it may be. Can the guilty one "go in unto the King, which is not according to law"? (Esther iv. 16).

I. Legal prohibition (ver. 1; *cf.* Deut. xxiv. 4). A man may not again marry his divorced wife after she has united herself with another. 1. There are legal penalties to sin. 2. The apostate from God is divorced from Him. 3. It is contrary to law for the guilty to find grace. "The soul that sinneth, *it shall die.*" That is law; no more return to God; but having gone away *voluntarily*, to "go away" *compulsorily* and *eternally* (Matt. xxv. 46).

II. Condemnatory facts (ver. 2, 3). Declares: 1. Her unlimited abandonment to guilt (ver. 2). 2. Her shameless effrontery and persistency (ver. 3). *Our sins* are (1.) not imaginary, but positive; (2.) not difficult to find, but glaring; (3.) not mere indiscretions, but appalling; (4.) not few, but multitudinous. And *our apostasy* from God has made us (1.) insensible to affliction ("showers withheld"); (2.) hardened in shamelessness. "Sin is not a conjugal, but an adulterous relation."

III. Conjugal relationship recalled (ver. 4). "My Father, Thou *wast* the *Husband* of my youth" (*cf.* Prov. ii. 17; see also Jer. iii. 20). 1. God reminds her of what she was in her youth. How have we deteriorated and fallen! 2. God laments her present life of falsity. Backsliding grieves the Lord. 3. God would awaken her from insensibility to penitent reflections. 4. God shows Himself still a loyal, loving Husband. He does not drive the backslider or the sinner away, but mourns, "How can I give thee up?" (chap. ii. 2). Yea, He still calls to faithless Judah, "*Return to Me*" (iii. 1).

IV. Desperate trifling with God (ver. 5). 1. Judah responds with *fair words*. "Will he reserve," &c., is Judah's soliloquy upon hearing God's appeal (ver. 4). The prophet chides her, "Behold, thou hast spoken!" Such is thine answer to God's patient and pleading remonstrance. The language shows—(1.) Conscious demerit, "anger;" (2.) dread of punishment; (3.) belief in mercy: that He will not keep it to the end. But there is no cry of repentance and self-abhorrence. Have we only thus spoken? or not rather Job xlii. 6? 2. Judah persisted in *foul deeds*. Although "thou hast spoken" thus, yet "*thou hast done evil persistently.*" To deprecate the continuance of Divine displeasure, and yet by our conduct to "provoke the Holy One of Israel to anger," is the most solemn trifling. How deplorable the state of a soul which sins on *unrestrained by conscience* or *fear of God's wrath* (ver. 5); and more, *unmoved by the pathos of love* (ver. 4).

Ver. 6–11. Israel's Divorce: its Lessons Lost upon Judah.

The kingdom of Israel had been destroyed, and the ten tribes driven into exile as the Divine punishment of idolatry and apostasy. This fact was daily evident to Judah; Israel cast off from God, abandoned to captivity for her criminal

impiety. What effect would this produce upon "her sister Judah"?—restrain her? Keep her watchful, loyal? Alas! (ver. 10, 11).

I. Though both were guilty, there was a distinction and a difference of criminality in their respective sins. 1. *The distinction.* Israel's sin was apostasy (ver. 6). Judah's sin was treachery (ver. 7). *Apostasy, i.e.,* utter desertion of God, is contrasted with *falsehood, i.e.,* criminal hypocrisy, dissimulation, a show of piety covering the vilest impiety. 2. *The degree.* Judah had the warning of Israel's example and ruin. Yet (1.) Israel abandoned herself to impiety (ver. 6), and Judah, instead of avoiding her sin, *did the same.* She "saw it" (ver. 7), yet, with open eyes, knowing the doom, she trod the same course; (2.) Israel had gone into exile for her iniquity; yet Judah *despised the warning.* She "feared not" (ver. 8); (3.) Israel refused to return at God's call (ver. 7), but Judah professedly did respond, yet *played a false part* (ver. 10). Feigned a piety she inwardly loathed (Gal. vi. 7).

II. Hypocrisy calls forth severer reproaches from God than apostasy (ver. 11). Judah *had knowledge,* "saw" (ver. 7), yet *cared nothing,* "feared not" (ver. 8), and *mocked God* (ver. 10). Whereas Israel acted blindly, madly, wickedly, but without deliberation or design. 1. Hypocrisy is deliberate, not merely impetuous. 2. Flauntingly insolent, not merely indifferent. 3. Trifling and pretentious, not madly blind. The pharisee worse than the publican; traitor worse than the rebel. *A deeper depravity of heart* underlies the sin. *A greater provocation to God* is furnished by the sin. To delude man by a mock piety is bad, but to attempt to pass a counterfeit repentance on God is daringly blasphemous. (Comp. the Saviour's "anger" and awful "woes" against the pretentious, hypocritical pharisees, Mark iii. 5, and Matt. xxiii.)

Ver. 12–14. Israel Invited to Renew her Marriage by Repentance.

"Backsliding:" a metaphor taken from oxen which refuse to draw in the yoke put upon them (Hos. iv. 16).

i. *God sends messages of mercy and not of judgment* (ver. 12). Well might He have cast them off utterly. But He delighteth in mercy, and "willeth not the death of the sinner." By many prophets did He thus invite them to return (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15); they even "wearied Him" with their obstinacy (Isa. xliii. 24).

ii. *God requires that they humble themselves before Him* (ver. 13). This indispensable. Not consistent with His honour that He should receive them while they hardened themselves against Him. To compensate for their wickedness was impossible, but must confess it, and humble themselves on account of it.

iii. *God urges the most affecting considerations in order to prevail upon them.* 1. The merciful disposition He felt towards them (ver. 12). 2. The relation under which He still regarded them (ver. 14). 3. The benefits which He was still ready to confer upon them (ver. 14 *sq.*).—*From Simeon.*

Ver. 15–20. Restoration to Lost Spiritual Privileges Open to both Israel and Judah.

Conditional on true repentance (ver. 13), God pictures a bright future for His erring people.

i. *Suffering a common exile* (ver. 18) in "the land of the north;" Israel in Assyria, Judah in Babylonia; because of faithlessness (ver. 20).

ii. *Duration of their banishment limited* (ver. 16. 18). "In those days"—God foresees the dawn. "Seasons are in His power" (Acts i. 7).

iii. *Simultaneous return from exile* (ver. 18). "Come together." Israel went into captivity 100 years before Judah. Redemption simultaneous.

iv. *Restoration to the lost inheritance* (ver. 18; comp. Amos ix. 15). Laid waste by conquerors, yet the land was sacred; kept for them by God for them to reoccupy (Luke xxi. 24).

v. *Enriched with national prosperity* (ver. 16). "Multiplied and increased in the land." This is frequently portrayed (see xxiii. 3; Ezek. xxxvi. 11).

vi. *Blessed with spiritual privileges* (ver. 16, 17). Transcending the value of the ark and the Shekinah in the Temple.

vii. *Sacred relationship again realised* (ver. 19). "Thou shalt call me, My Father." The veil upon their heart removed: light and love!

viii. *Revolt no more possible.* "Neither shall any more walk after evil heart" (ver. 17). "Not turn from Me" (ver. 19). Loyal: God all in all.

ix. *Ruled by wise governors* (ver. 15). Civil rulers, who will reign righteously, foster righteousness, and encourage the people to piety.

x. *Glorified in the esteem of the world* (ver. 17). Attracting the heathen (ver. 19). "A goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations." Admired and envied throughout the world.

"That this prophecy was fulfilled by the return under Zerubbabel and Ezra is opposed by the fact—(i.) *That not even the whole of Judah*, while but a few of Israel, then returned; (ii.) That not even Judah had then *returned to the Lord*, still less were the heathen converted (ver. 17). Its fulfilment by the founding of the Christian Church is contradicted by the fact—(i.) That the *reunion of Judah and Israel had not taken place* (Israel being still lost); (ii.) That Israel in general *has rejected the Lord*, and refused to enter the Christian Church; (iii.) That *though the heathen are being drawn* to the Lord and the Jerusalem that is above (Gal. iv. 26), yet *this has not taken place in such a measure* or manner as *to fulfil* ver. 17, which predicts the conversion of all nations, and the removal of their hardness of heart. We must, therefore, still wait for the complete fulfilment of this prophecy." —*Naeg. in Lange.*

"The fulfilment is *accomplished gradually.* It *begins* with the end of the Babylonian exile, in so far as at that time individual members of the ten tribes may have returned into the land of their fathers. It is *continued* in Messianic times during the lives of the apostles, by the reception, on the part of the Israelites, of the salvation that had appeared in Christ. It is *carried on* throughout the whole history of the Church, and attains its *completion* in the final conversion of Israel." —*Keil.*

Ver. 21–25. Their Penitential Return to the Lord their God.

In prophetic prevision Jeremiah beholds his nation, broken-hearted for sin, seeking Jehovah with tears, contrition, and shame. The revelries of idolatry are silenced on the heights, and cries of poignant grief sound loud throughout the scene. A nation weeps for her sin: exiles come home with supplications; God's people are restored to their long-lost rest. Here is fulfilled the *condition* of the sinner's forgiveness and acceptance (ver. 13). Their case proves—

I. That privileged people may so sin as to necessitate bitterest repentance. Israel and Judah had all sacred persuasions to spiritual fidelity (Rom. ix. 4, 5). We may stand amid religious surroundings and helps, yet may equally fall (Rom. xi. 20). See the sin of this people: 1. *Erring from the right way* (ver. 21); "perverted their way:" began with inconsistent conduct; turning aside. 2. *Neglect of God* (ver. 21); "forgotten the Lord:" advanced from error and inconsistency into habitual disregard of God; practical irreligion. 3. *Positive resistance and disobedience* (ver. 25); "sinned *against the Lord:*" no longer negative, but wilful, intentional antagonism. 4. *Defiance of Divine remonstrance and appeals* (ver. 25); "not obeyed His voice:" though He called, they refused; despised His prophets, message, warnings: they would not allow God a hearing. This had become a settled state of things (ver. 25); "we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day." What a warning that we "take heed lest we fall"! None but may repeat their sins.

II. That most criminal revolt from God may terminate in penitential return

(ver. 21). If these might, who may not? 1. There is hope for the *guiltiest*. 2. Those *longest in sin may awake* to loathe it. 3. True repentance is *possible to backsliders*. 4. The end of life is *not too late* for return. "After so long a time," Israel "arose and came to the Father." "At evening time light." Let none close the door of hope, of opportunity, of mercy, on others or on themselves. God keeps it open to *the last*, and for *the worst*. (Addenda to chap. iii., ver. 25, "*Even unto this day.*")

III. That an evil course of life wastes and debases those who follow it (ver. 24, 25). (Addenda to chap. iii., "*Shame*," and "*Sin debases.*") 1. Sinners are despoiled of *self-respect*; "shame." 2. Sinning is an *expensive* luxury; "devoured the labour, flocks and herds." 3. Sinful parents cannot hold back *even their own children from destruction*; "sons and daughters." Moloch asks them. Society demands the children of godless parents; and how can they restrain them from sacrificing to pleasure, vanity, vice? 4. Sin lays low all its followers in *abasement and confusion* (ver. 25). Well if it does this ere too late. But the guilty *will* see themselves vile and foolish; the day must come.

IV. That a voice of gracious expostulation pleads with the guilty to return (ver. 22). 1. God's call pursues men when they *desert Him*. 2. A Divine pleading is heard in *every heart*. 3. Even the *vilest* are conscious that a pitying Father *awaits their return*. 4. Man's duty is *to act* on that thought; "return." 5. There is "healing" for every wrong in God's graciousness. 6. Appropriate address from the penitent; "we come to Thee;" for God calls men to *Himself*, not to ceremonies, and self-improvement, and human remedies. 7. *All-sufficiency and perfect welcome* assured; "for Thou art *the Lord*," therefore "nothing too hard;" "the Lord *our God*," therefore He is ready to greet and receive them.

V. That hopes of salvation are found to be delusive until the soul rests in God (ver. 23).

1. *False hopes:* in *strong* things, "hills and mountains;" in *numerous* objects, "multitude," = the many gods and scenes of idolatry.

2. *True hope:* "truly in the Lord," &c. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. xlv. 22); "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12).

HISTORIC EVENTS INDICATED IN CHAPTER III.

A. Facts connected with the career of outcast Israel (ver. 12, 14, 18). (See Addenda to chap. iii., "*The lost Ten Tribes.*")

i. *Outcast, yet not lost* (ver. 12). God knew where they were. Denationalised and exiled; yet God directed a message to them in "the north." (See *Geographical reference* on ver. 12 above.) Since the first captivity by Tiglath-pilesar, 115 years had passed, and nearly 100 since Sargon (son of Shalmanezar) swept the land clean of Israelites, and bore them away into the northern provinces of Assyria (2 Kings xvii. 18, 23). Thus outcast, they were to lose all connection with Jehovah, and all recognition of their former history. This was easy; for their habitual idolatry would lead them into speedy surrender of all relics of their *religious distinction*; and, as their numbers were not vast, they would not long preserve any *national distinctness*, but become absorbed amid the admixture of peoples which the Assyrian conquests gathered together in the north. But though long lost to themselves, they were *not* lost to God. He knew *where to address them*. And He will know *where to seek them* when the time of their return shall arrive (Isa. xi. 11, 18; *cf.* ver. 18).

ii. *Banished, yet still beloved* (ver. 14). "I am married unto you." God respects and preserves His relationship to Israel *unchanged*, although she had been *banished a hundred years*, and was *fading from national existence*. This sanctions Paul's assertion "God hath not cast away His people" (Rom. xi. 1, 2). And

this unchanging relationship and imperishable love are asserted by God in terms of the most unequivocal and solemn character (Jer. xxxi. 37).

iii. *Destined to local and spiritual restoration.* "I will take you one of a city and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion" (ver. 14). "In those days the house of Judah shall walk to the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north," &c. (ver. 18). This promise cannot be limited to the return from exile under the edict of Cyrus. The two kingdoms, Judah and Israel, have not yet "come together," nor have they yet used the language of ver. 22. Nor has Israel learned to cry "My Father!" (ver. 19). Their *joint restoration* and *conversion to God* are therefore yet future (*cf.* Ezek. xxxvii. 16 to end). God will keep and fulfil His covenant promises.

B. The actual state of Judah under the eye of God (ver. 4, 10). The words "*from this time*," mark the epoch as special. Judah hath "*turned unto Me feignedly*," asserts a national show of repentance. For this incident, *Judah professedly repentant before Jehovah*, we must turn to 2 Chron. xxxv. 1–19, the national celebration of the passover, which succeeded Josiah's reforms, and asserted Judah's restoration to the Lord. That this chapter coincides with that incident is confirmed by the reference to *the ark*, both in the arrangements for that passover (2 Chron. xxxv. 3), and in this prophecy (iii. 16). Yet, notwithstanding the great parade of national repentance, God declares it to be unreal (ver. 10).

Theme: Reformation no guarantee of religion. A ritual piety not necessarily real piety. (Addenda to chap. iii., ver. 10, "*Ritual*" and "*Feignedly.*") In Judah's case it was the result of authority and policy. Josiah ordered it: not spontaneous; therefore not sincere. The king had cleansed the land, and brought the nation to yield a formal homage to Jehovah: the prophet proclaimed it utterly corrupt and hypocritical.

I. External reform may be unattended by spiritual regeneration. Ostensible repentance, external rectitude, these co-existed with a heart withheld from God. Judah had not cried, "My Father," &c. (ver. 4).

1. *To rectify evil habits does not prove inward renewal.* "Garnished sepulchres" may contain "all uncleanness."

2. *A revival of ritual may not result from revival of religion.* The passover observed with ostentacious care was a mockery. Æsthetic ritual cannot argue religious affections, sanctified lives: decorated altars may not imply devotional worshippers. As well urge that "hewed cisterns" guarantee pure and "living water." Pharisaism in general may be but another name for falsity.

II. The distinctive province of the king and the prophet in the realm of religion. As far as the king went, all was right. He could do no more: effected complete revolution in religious habits of Judah, rectified abuses of Temple, re-established true religion.

1. *Royalty can dictate the forms and mode of religion.* History often shown this. What then? Are people thereby made religious? Would another "Act of Uniformity" ensure piety throughout England? Can the king rule conscience, sway hearts?

2. *Human effort pauses where true religion only begins.* God commences with the "heart" (ver. 10). Man's work must stop there: he can carry reform no further than "making clean the outside of the cup and platter." Hence God sent *the prophet* to work where the king could not, to arouse the nation's inward and spiritual response to the royal reform: to appeal to Judah "from that time," so propitious for a real repentance, "to cry unto Him, My Father."

III. Reformation without spiritual renewal may prove a perilous delusion. It may quiet and lull. Possibly Judah felt herself religious, having done so much that was pious. Reformed sinners are not easily won to repentance. They fortify themselves in a self-satisfied pride. 1. *Outward piety may co-exist with inward sin.* A compromise: but loathsome to God, who "looketh not on appearance."

2. *Outward piety is more readily accepted than repentance.* It costs no self-humiliations and heart-conflicts; no "crucifixion of the affections and lusts;" no abasement before God. 3. *Outward piety is evanescent and worthless.* The king's work was effective: the people responded: Judah became religious. But what ensued? Revulsion when the king died. Nation rushed back to idolatry and vice so soon as the outward restraint was gone. Test such a piety, and it dies. Take the king away who smiled on it, remove the advantages of such a religion, and the thing is gone! Therefore *God was still angry with Judah*, and *doom was not averted.*

C. **The land withered by drought because of sin** (ver. 3). "Therefore the showers withholden, no latter rain."

Clearly affirmed that fertility of the land dependent on conduct of the people (*cf.* chap. ix. 12, 13; Lev. xxvi. 19, 20; Deut. xxviii. 23, 24). The "latter rain" was formerly essential to the beauty and fruitfulness of the country: these have been permanently withdrawn; hence the sterility of the land as it now lies, so markedly in contrast with the ancient accounts of its teeming productiveness and delightful richness. Usually this is accounted for by the reduced population and neglect of culture. They may be the effect rather than the cause: cultivation discouraged and population minished in consequence of a disadvantageous change in the climate and seasons. Observe that *rain and consequent fertility* were *promised conditionally* (see Deut. xi. 13–15); the people's faithfulness was therefore essential to their being enjoyed and retained; that gone, these have ceased. This a question of fact, certified by competent authority. The physical condition of the climate, the seasons, and the soil have been tested with a view to agriculture. Grass seed, carried from England and sown there, would perish the very first summer. The harvest is marred and impoverished because of drought. Vegetables cannot keep alive; flowers cannot blow and yield their sweets. The land has lost, what it must formerly have enjoyed, "the latter rain." God has, as it were, turned the key upon the refreshing and fructifying bounties of the skies. He has commanded the clouds that they rain not as formerly upon the inheritance of His disobedient people. Only in this way can be explained the present state of the heights, which were once mountains clothed with grass, but have become bare rocks. The grass must have perished under the hot sun, which now burns from April to November, the soil become loose and pulverised, unable to resist the high winds of the summer and the floods of winter. This, repeated year after year, would soon lay bare the rocks. *All this is to be remedied;* promises portray the land again fruitful, the mountains rich with produce. It will require no miracle to do this; only the restoration of "the rain in its due season." (*Cf.* Kitto's *Bible Illustrations* on this text.) The temporary withholding of *all* the rains for three and a half years during Elijah's ministry (1 Kings xvii. 1; Luke iv. 25) has become permanent as respects the *vernal* rain; sin being the occasion in each case.

D. **The Ark lost in the Babylonian Captivity** (ver. 16). (Comp. *Literary Criticisms* on ver. 16.)

Manasseh removed the ark from its place in the Temple to make way for the "carved image" which, in his reckless idolatry, he reared in the holy place (2 Chron. xxxiii. 7). This explains its reinstatement by Josiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 3). In all probability this ark was carried away or destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Esdras x. 21, 22); for it disappeared together with the two tables of stone it contained at the Babylonish captivity, when the Temple was plundered and destroyed. Jewish authorities all are agreed that it was never restored, or replaced in the second Temple. The Jews think it will be restored when Messiah appears, but this verse dissipates the delusion.

HOMILIES ON SELECTED VERSES IN CHAPTER III.

Ver. 4. *Them:* GOD'S TENDER EXPOSTULATION WITH THE YOUNG.

I. The particulars of the proposal.

1. That you should make God your "Father." Not merely call Him so, but that you become His children. By disobedience you have put yourself out of His family, like the prodigal. *How* can you become His children? (Gal. iii. 26; John i. 12). By faith we are made one with Christ, and admitted into "the household of God" (see Gal. iv. 6).

2. That you should choose God for the "Guide of your youth." This implies that you regard His authority, follow His will, comply with His directions: these are made known to us:

a. By His Word. "Lamp to our feet," &c.: reveals Christ as "the Way. Truth," &c. "Follow me."

b. By His Spirit. Enlightens and directs our conscience, influences our hearts and desires. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

3. That you do these things without delay. "From this time." A sad propensity to answer with Felix, "Go thy way for this time," &c. But God counsels that no time is so favourable as the present. "To-day, if hear His voice."

II. The motives for compliance.

1. The grace and condescension of the proposal. "What manner of love!" (1 John iii. 1). Can you refuse to be drawn by these "cords of love"?

2. The reasonableness of such a proceeding. Your own interests urge your compliance. Where find a Father like God? Numberless evils from which He alone can save you. No other Guide can conduct through intricate paths to eternal rest.

3. The seasonableness of the proposal. Opportunities lost are gone for ever. Present time is your own. "Now is accepted time." "Wilt thou not from this time cry," &c.?

"From *this* time:" perhaps this is a special date with you: of *affliction, deliverance, rejoicing.* Perhaps conscious now of a secret desire to give yourself up to God.—*Rev. Ed. Cooper, "Practical Sermons,"* 1816.

Theme: YOUTH'S GRACIOUS HOUR; GOD'S TIMELY CALL.

Enticements and appeals fall around the young. "Take me as your guide!" cries Pleasure, Society, Gain, Sin in gay form, Vice with smooth lips. *Around none* so many calls; mature and aged heard same voices in their youth, but silent now to them. *Within none* so many cravings: as young life unfolds expectation awakes, curiosity impels; hence snares surround and seducers are alert. Falls a voice from heaven on the young: text. (Addenda to chap. iii., ver. 4, "*The guide of my youth.*")

I. Youth's reckless wanderings. "*From this time* cry to Me." Had not done so hitherto: other voices heeded and followed: Vanity; Fancy; Indulgence; Avarice; Scepticism. How few young have made God their Guide! Tread "broad road to destruction."

II. Youth's eminent value. Young life more coveted than mature. Splendid triumph for *Satan when ruins a young character!* What a history a young man or woman may mark out; may go through the years like angel of light; or a firebrand. *God* values young life. "Remember Creator in days of youth." What a *salvation is effected* when young soul is gathered into grace!

III. Youth's urgent need. "Guide."

1. Way of life is beset with dangers. Evil examples; evil counsellors. "Compass sea and land to make proselyte."

2. Young are themselves readily deceived. Through their own wayward propensities and inexperience. Hence easily fall into temptation. Certainly ill adapted to hold the rudder of their own life, and steer amid the hidden rocks.

IV. Youth's precious opportunity. "From this time; my youth." Young life most easily guided. Call the mountain wanderer back ere he fall! Young—1. Not yet fettered in the captivity of habit. 2. Not enthralled by settled companionships of life. 3. Not lost the sacred influences of early teaching. 4. Not yet insensible to Divine influ-

ences. 5. Not forfeited opportunity of grace. "From this time cry."

V. Youth's happy resolution. "My Father, Thou art my Guide."

The resolve indicates: 1. Discrimination; 2. Decision; 3. Distinction; for he will "come out from among them, be separate," &c.

Who now ready with the cry? Be resolved. "Be not like dumb driven cattle." "*Choose ye this day.*"

Ver. 5. *Theme:* THE SINNER'S DESPERATE DEPRAVITY. "Behold thou hast spoken and done evil as thou couldst."

Men are as depraved as they can possibly be in present circumstances. Charge made by the infinitely Holy One against every member of the human family. Substantiated by considering:

I. *That God, in His providence, has surrounded the sinner with many circumstances operating powerfully to modify human character.*

1. Education. 2. Human law has a similar effect. 3. The law of God. 4. The troublesome supervision of conscience. 5. The whole Gospel, interfering with the sinful pleasures and follies of men. 6. All the Gospel institutions. 7. The desire in man for heaven. 8. The fear of hell. 9. The expectation of judgment. 10. Public sentiment. 11. The domestic affections. These are all so many golden chains, restraining the sinner from wrong. Ought to thank God for these modifying circumstances. A man's state is hopeful in proportion as he is held by these moral bonds.

II. *By these circumstances every sinner is actually restrained in his wickedness, and held back in his downward career.* In proof of which, observe:

1. Men are uneasy under these circumstances, which shows them to be restraints. 2. Men are constantly trying to alter their circumstances. 3. When men succeed in altering their circumstances in any of these respects, they usually show out a worse character. 4. When these restraints are all removed, men are uniformly far more wicked than if they had not been imposed.

III. *That every sinner does make the attempt, and succeeds, as far as God will let him, to sunder these ligatures that would hold him fast to reason, hope, and heaven.* Trace his steps, and see how he breaks over and breaks through the restraints of—1. Education; 2. Human laws; 3. God's laws; 4. Supervision of conscience; 5. Institutions of the Gospel; 6. Thoughts of heaven and fear of hell; 7. Public sentiment; 8. Domestic affections.

Such is the obstinacy, rebelliousness, ingratitude of the sinner. Must he not then be "born again," have new heart and right spirit, or never enter kingdom of God?—"*Preacher's Treasury.*"

Comments: Ver. 6–10. *Judah the guiltier sister.*

The two kingdoms are described as sisters in iniquity. In Ezekiel (xxiii. 4) the same metaphor is applied to the two metropolises of those kingdoms, Samaria and Jerusalem: "Aholah and Aholibah." (Addenda to chap. iii., ver. 7, "*Falsity.*")

Israel is stigmatised as *Apostasy* and Judah as *Falsity:* but the heavier sin is laid to Judah's account. Her criminality is marked as having *three stages:* (1) she "*saw*" Israel's sin, yet repeated it herself; (2) she "*feared not*" the penalties with which she beheld Israel punished; and (3) she "*feigned*" a piety when her practices were impious. Hence she is called "*Falsity:*" and her threefold sin is most solemnly emphasised.

"She sinned against greater convictions."—*W. Lowth.*

"Aliorum tormenta aliorum remedia sunt."—*Jerome.*

"Though the reform of Josiah was only a pseudo-revival, it furnishes us with the means of judging how deep a genuine revival ought to go. Mark ix. 43–48."—*Lange.*

This external renovation of Judah, which swept the land of abuses, was uncomprising and severe. Yet was *not enough.* God was not content. How then will they do who profess and believe themselves Christians, whose lives are not self-denying and pure!

God requires "truth in the inward parts," and thoroughness in religious conduct. "No fellowship between light and darkness;" no accommodating our piety to convenience, circumstances, and sinful ease.

Ver. 10. "*Judah hath not turned to me with her whole heart, but feignedly,*" *i.e.*, in falsehood.

i. *False repentance.* 1. Its ground—servile fear. 2. Its effect—external reform.

ii. *True repentance.* 1. Its ground—love to God. 2. Its effect—honest fruits of sanctification.—*Lange.*

Ver. 11. *Theme:* COMPARATIVE CRIMINALITY.

This subject may not be used for self-preference and self-complacency, or incalculable injury may ensue (2 Cor. x. 12). Both had sinned grievously: Israel more openly; Judah in a more covert way. God declared Judah's criminality exceeded that of Israel. Let me

I. *State this decision of the Lord.*

Israel, from the time they became a distinct nation, *cast off God;* therefore given into Assyrian captivity and divorced by God.

Judah had *retained the worship of God,* but revelled in idolatry at the same time, and paid divine honours to idols (Zeph. i. 5).

Because of their *apparent* superiority, Judah would scarcely own her relationship to Israel (Ezek. xxxiii. 24).

Though *their sins were ostensibly less,* they were committed with tenfold aggravations; for their *advantages* had been greater, larger *number of prophets* sent them, enjoyed *stated ordinances, presence of God* was in their midst (in Temple).

Despising and abusing all these, their guilt was greater.

We argue that *any religion is better than none;* that the appearance of regard for God is better than avowed contempt. God pronounces other: the *form* without the power of godliness is more offensive than entire impiety. Therefore text.

II. *Confirm this decision of the Lord.*

Specious insincerity is worse than open profaneness, because

1. It argues a *deeper depravity* of heart. Sin is committed against conscience, against the motions of God's Spirit within.

2. It casts *more dishonour upon God.* A sinner openly casts off God's yoke; but the hypocrite professedly says, "I am God's servant, know my duty and perform it!" It degrades holiness, the name of God is blasphemed, and the way of truth is evil spoken of.

3. It does *more extensive injury* to man. His example encourages sinners in sin, and gives the ungodly a reason to contemn true Christians as being "righteous over-much." He thus offends God's people, and casts a stumbling-block before the guilty. Address:

(1.) Those who are *careless about religion.* You justify yourselves on the ground that you are not hypocrites and make no profession. Yet think of the judgments which fell on *Israel.*

(2.) Those who *profess religion.* God will have "your whole heart;" no feignedness. Christ said to Laodicea, "I would thou wert cold or hot," &c. Be not "lukewarm," but wholly the Lord's.—*Rev. C. Simeon, M.A.*

Comments:

Ver. 11. To what reflections should the declaration of Scripture give rise, that *the Divine judgment is determined by the comparison of men* with each other? 1. We should reflect that it is impossible for us to institute this comparison with perfect justice ourselves. 2. We should therefore draw from comparison with others occasion neither for despair nor false comfort. 3. We should rather allow this comparison to be a motive to severe self-discipline.

Vers. 12, 13. *God's call to repentance.* 1. Its ground (I am merciful). 2. Its object (to obtain grace). 3. Its condition (acknowledge thy sin).—*Lange.* (Addenda to chap. iii. ver. 13, "*Acknowledge thy sin.*")

Ver. 13. *Theme:* TAKING SIDE WITH GOD AGAINST OURSELVES AND OUR SIN. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity."

Just as the publican, abhorrent with

himself, and ashamed of long resistance of God, bowed in abasement and confession. Holding out against God no longer; hiding sin from God—refusing to own it—no longer. Return to God might be through *misery*—not regret for the sin which caused it; or from *policy*—desiring escape from evils and gain of benefits, without heart-grief or spiritual surrender.

I. What God asks of the sinner.

"Acknowledge;" which means—1. *Capitulation* of his pride; realises himself vile. 2. *Contrition* within his heart; laments and upbraids his folly and rebellion. 3. *Confession* upon his lips; all covered with shame, coming back prodigal-like, publican-like to God. "Acknowledge;" "*If* we confess our sin, God will forgive," &c.

II. What God arrays before the sinner.

"Only acknowledge *that*," &c.

1. *Spiritual relationship violated.* "Transgressed against the Lord *thy* God." It is the sin of faithlessness; not of one who never knew the Lord.

2. *Spiritual prostitution practised.* "Scattered thy ways to strangers."

3. *Spiritual independence asserted.* "Hast not obeyed;" resented God's control.

These three aspects of sin, as God regards it, show the course of evil to be an *outrage*, *debasing*, *defiant* against all law and all love.

III. What God assures to the sinner. Elsewhere in His Word are given precious assurances to the soul who confesses sin (Luke xviii. 14; 1 John i. 9).

Here:

1. *Reception to His unalienated love* (ver. 14.) "I am married." Israel's disloyalty had not estranged Him. God keeps the door wide open for the wanderer.

2. *Reinstatement in the covenant privileges of Zion* (ver. 14). Her wandering had surrendered all—far off, in oppression; but "made nigh," brought again "to Zion." (Addenda on ver. 13, "*Acknowledge iniquity.*")

Ver. 14. To Backsliders.

God, the loving Husband. Sin, spiritual adultery. He hates "putting away," and invites return (ver. 1).

I. The nature of backsliding. It is going back—1. Easily; 2. Gradually; 3. Silently.

Backsliding is generally preceded by—1. Pride (Prov. xvi. 18); 2. Vain confidence (Matt. xxvi. 33); 3. Negligence (Matt. xxvi. 58).

A man may be—

1. Enticed by sinful pleasures (2 Sam. xi.).

2. Led back by sinful companions (1 Kings xi.).

3. Driven back by sinful fears (Matt. xxvi. 69–74).

II. The misery of backsliding.

1. *Heavy losses.* (1.) His self-respect. (2.) Tender conscience. (3.) Sweetest enjoyments. (4.) Brightest hopes.

2. *Severe disappointment.* His holy expectations are lost (of what he might have been, and done for Christ, and the after rewards).

3. *Terrible disgrace.* (1.) Before the world, as a hypocrite. (2.) Before the Church, as "the thief" (Jer. ii. 12). (3.) Before God (Ps. li. 3–9).

III. The remedy for backsliding. "Return," &c.

1. *Immediately.* (1.) Delay makes your case worse. (2.) God is willing to pardon. (3.) The Church is waiting to receive you.

2. *Humbly.* (1.) Confessing sin. (2.) Abhorring sin (Hos. xiv. 8). (3.) Forsaking sin.

3. *Believingly.* Remember—(1.) The love of your espousals. (2.) The individuality of your relationship. (3.) The love of your Husband. (4.) Your own duty.—*The Study.*

Comments: Ver. 14.

On "*I will take you one of a city,*" &c., Dr. Blayney remarks: "This passage relates to their call into the Christian Church, into which they were brought, not all at a time, nor in a national capacity, but severally as individuals, here and there one" (*cf.* Isa. xxvii. 12).

On "*I am married to you,*" the Rev. F. D. Maurice, M.A., writes: "These words affirm that a mysterious bond, which no sin of theirs had been able

to break, united even those tribes which were gone into captivity to the God of Abraham; that He was still holding intercourse with them (ver. 12), and seeking to bring their hearts back to Himself."—*Prophets and Kings.*

"God keeps His covenant, which men have broken by their sins, as strictly and securely as though they had never broken it."—*Starke.*

Ver. 15. "*Pastors;*" refer to notes on ii. 8. Not military usurpers, such as Israel had herself preferred (Hos. viii. 4), but men "after God's heart" (1 Sam. xiii. 4).

"The evangelical pastorate—i. *Its standard;* 'after My heart.' ii. *Its task;* to feed them with doctrine and wisdom."—*Lange.*

Ver. 16, 17. *Theme:* A BRIGHT AND BLESSED VISION. "It shall come to pass in those days."

It was an outlook beyond the Captivity; beyond even the return which Cyrus granted,—the prophet's eye saw a glory which excelled the gladness of that event: the Messianic age. "*Those days*" point definitely to Christ's advent and kingdom (*cf.* chap. xxxiii. 14–16).

In a *lower* and *lesser* sense these predicted events may have been verified in the return from Babylonian captivity, but were *fulfilled* in Christ.

I. The spiritual kingdom: a vision of joyous prosperity (ver. 16.) "Multiplied and increased in the land." The "little flock" shall have and "possess the kingdom." "Little one become a thousand," &c.

> "Far and wide, though all unknowing,
> Pants for Thee each mortal breast;
> Human tears for Thee are flowing,
> Human hearts in Thee would rest.
> Saviour! lo, the isles are waiting,
> Stretched the hand and strained the sight."
> —A. C. COXE.

The realisation of the world's hope is in the kingdom of Jesus.

II. The spiritual kingdom: symbols and external forms abandoned.

"They shall say no more The Ark of the covenant," &c. (ver. 16). The Ark was but a shadow of Christ—in Him dwelt the law; on Him rested the Shekinah. The real displaces and abrogates the sign; and hearts no more rest in signs when the real has come. Who would longer bend over a portrait of a child, when lo! the long-absent boy is now returned and in the home? From the picture the heart turns to embrace the living one. (Addenda to chap. iii. ver. 16, 17, "*Symbols.*")

III. The spiritual kingdom: loving allegiance to the Lord.

Ver. 17. Gathering to and around "the throne of the Lord" = binding themselves loyally to Him: the heart fixed on Him: no God but Him: His "throne," or rule, drawing men into happy subjection (*cf.* Matt. xi. 29, 30).

IV. The spiritual kingdom: inward love manifested in holy life.

Ver. 17. "No more walk after evil heart." Loyally adhering to God, the life shall be free from self-will and pursuit of selfish delights, walking in the Saviour's steps, following the Lord fully. This Christian walk will be the outward evidence of the inward allegiance to God's throne.

Comments:

Ver. 17. Not the *Ark* "shall be called the throne of the Lord," as formerly it had been, but "*Jerusalem*," *i.e.*, the Christian Church (Rev. xxi. 2; Gal. iv. 26; Zech. ii. 10, 11).—*Speaker's Commentary.*

The Ark had just been restored to its place in the Temple with much solemnity and jubilant celebration by king, and priests, and people. What a sublime and far-reaching vision was this of the prophet's, which descried an age when the Ark would be counted as nothing! And how much more glorious that age!

"They will have the true Ark in Christ. When the prophet says that the Ark will no longer be remembered, and yet Jerusalem will be called the throne of the Lord (ver. 17), he means that the whole Levitical economy—of which the Ark was the centre and the key—would pass away, and be succeeded and consummated in the presence and glory of the Lord in His Church."

"*Jerusalem*" (the Church), will receive all nations into her bosom: where

Christ is enthroned as king (Heb. xii. 22).—*Wordsworth.*

Ver. 16. *Theme:* CHRIST, THE TRUE ARK OF THE COVENANT.

i. *A most alarming and unwelcome announcement.* That the Ark would disappear, and another not made. "It was the most costly jewel of the people, the central point of their whole existence." Overlaid with gold, overshadowed by glory (Heb. ix. 4, 5), visible symbol of Divine presence: borne by priests around Jericho: national amaze when it was taken by Philistines, joy when restored: disasters befell nation in Saul's days because Ark neglected; prosperity under David because honoured and a "resting-place" provided; and, finally, the display of Divine glory when Solomon transferred Ark to the Temple.

All this taught Israel that their safety and prosperity were connected with Ark of covenant. Called "Ark of God's strength" (2 Chron. vi. 41).

By some regarded with superstitious awe rather than reverential fear; yet by all as of incalculable value to the nation.

ii. *A bitter and irreconcilable loss.*

1. Prophecy soon fulfilled. After destruction of Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, the Ark was no more seen. Absent from second Temple, which was built soon after return from Babylon. This a solemn and perpetual intimation to them of the approaching removal of the whole typical system.

2. Loss deeply lamented. These returned Jews did *not* cease to remember the Ark, but fondly hoped for its restoration. This prophecy, that an age was nearing when the Ark "would not come to mind," remained, therefore, unfulfilled in them.

iii. *A surpassing compensation predicted.* The prophecy, that the Ark would be no more remembered or sought, implied a compensation which would far exceed their loss; so that what they once deplored as a privation, they would rejoice and glory in as an unspeakable gain.

1. The prediction must have seemed incredible at the time; yet afterwards proved consolatory. For in their loss of the Ark, this prophecy assured them God had better things in store.

2. How was the prediction fulfilled? In the appearing of Christ, the antitype of the Ark, Himself "the brightness of the Father's glory," God manifest in the flesh.

iv. *The realisation in Christ of all the Ark symbolised.*

1. The Divine nearness. 2. The Deity bending mercifully over men: for the *mercy-seat* was overshadowed. 3. The helpful and healing grace of God.

1. Israelites who early became Christians, and enjoyed the presence of Christ on earth, must have readily surrendered and forgotten the Ark in the realisation of Jesus and His tender grace.

2. Believers, though now not realising Christ bodily among them, experience His Spirit's indwelling, revealing Christ within. So that 1 Peter i. 8.

3. Contrite sinners can rejoice in the tenderness, lowliness, and compassion of Christ. None need any awful visible token of the Divine nearness.

All can come with boldness to the throne of grace: "having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

Arranged from Dr. Gordon's "Christ as made known to the Ancient Church."

Ver. 17. THE CHURCH CHRIST'S THRONE. (Addenda to chap. iii. "*Jerusalem, God's throne.*")

a. Jerusalem had been of old the throne of God: the symbol of God rested on the Ark. Hence called the "city of the Great King."

b. Jerusalem became the throne of God as never before when Emmanuel visited her. "Thou art the Son of God: Thou the *King of Israel.*" Yet she rejected her King.

c. Christ by His death founded a kingdom in which His Church has become the true throne of God. This is Zion, on which God hath set His King. There He sways kingly power.

I. *In the conversion of sinners the kingly power and authority of Christ is manifested.* Each case is a victory of Christ over the "enmity" of the carnal mind and the resistance of hellish foes.

Soul delivered "from power of Satan unto God."

II. *In maintaining His ascendancy over the lives and affections of His converts.* "Law in their members" at war with Him. The world strives to wrest them from His rule. Satan strives to recover his lost power. But they are held "in obedience to Christ," and "kept by the power of God unto salvation."

III. *In governing the world providentially for His Church's advantage.* Christ reigns as Mediator: "works all things for our good" and His glory; and *by*, and *for*, and *from* His Church He puts forth His power, that shall subdue all enemies under His feet. How does Christ's rule *affect individual members* of His Church?

1. To what extent can and may they enjoy personally the presence of their King? Sits enthroned in their heart and affections individually.

2. Christ must hold unrivalled and unlimited sway and sovereignty over their lives. His kingship absolute: their affections undivided: they habitually and entirely under the constraining influences of His love.

3. They will recognise that His care extends to every individual believer, sending expressions of His kindness and love to each, and never—save in faithfulness—afflicting them.

In proportion as they are thus subject unto Christ in everything do they enjoy the liberty of the sons of God.—*Idem.*

Vers. 18, 19. *Theme:* DIVISION AND REUNION.

As the *separation of the kingdoms*, Israel and Judah, might indicate the denominational divisions in Christendom, so the *reunion* here promised may suggest the method and basis of all true union. This must rest on a double negative and positive basis:

i. On the fundamental *return of both from the false ground* on which they have been standing (typified by the exit of both tribes from the north country, the land of captivity).

ii. On unreserved, sincere devotion to the Lord, who is for both the only source of life and truth (typified in the words, "Thou shalt call me, My Father").

iii. The *result* of this will be a condition of glorious prosperity in the Church (typified in the first clause of ver. 19).—*Lange.* (See Addenda to chap. iii. on "*Denominationalism.*")

Ver. 19. *Theme:* THE TRUE SOURCE OF SALVATION.

By Jeremiah God speaks as if at a loss how to exercise towards them the mercy He was inclined to bestow.

I. How the obstructions to the restoration of the Jews shall be surmounted.

1. *God Himself presents to them the formidable difficulty.* Jews always had been perverse. In wilderness: when in promised land: till at length He gave up ten tribes into hands of Assyria, and the other two into hands of Chaldeans. After restoration from Babylon, still as rebellious: at last filled up the measure of iniquity in the murder of their Messiah. Now, though scattered 1900 years over the earth, as obdurate as ever. How restored to the favour of God? (1.) Extent of their wickedness forbids it. (2.) Honour of God forbids it. To admit rebels to privileges encourages rebellion. Appear an excess of generosity subversive of all moral government.

2. *These obstacles, though formidable, shall be surmounted.* God had expressed His desire for their reconciliation. "Wilt thou not cry, My Father?" (ver. 4). Now He determines to effect it by His almighty power. "Thou shalt cry, My Father." This will overcome every obstacle. "If God will work, who will let it?" Vain was the resistance of Pharaoh, the sea, the wilderness, the united nations. As God spake the universe into existence, so will He form the "new creation."

II. How alone the difficulties in the way of our salvation can ever be overcome.

1. *There are immense difficulties in the way of our salvation.* Our wickedness equals or exceeds the Jews'. If they "crucified the Lord of glory," have we not "crucified Him afresh"? Jews of Christ's day were more criminal than Sodom, &c., because they had greater light; but we have far greater

knowledge and advantages than even they. Yet Heb. x. 29.

2. *But these shall be overcome.* If we looked to ourselves, salvation hopeless; but are to look to Him. He will interfere for us *in a way of sovereign grace* and by the *exercise of His almighty power.* (*a.*) His grace is His own, to dispense as He will. Says, "Thou *shalt* call me, My Father." (*b.*) And His power will perform it. "Thou shalt not turn from me" (Isa. xlvi. 10).

i. To those who question the possibility of their own salvation. God is able.

ii. To those who have entertained no such fears. You think salvation easy; but only Christ's blood could atone for such sin as yours; only the Divine Spirit could renew your depraved heart.

iii. To those who profess to have been brought into the family of God. Obey and trust Him as your "Father;" let nothing lead you to "turn away from Him."—*Rev. C. Simeon, M.A.*

Note: God does not (ver. 19) raise difficulties into sight; it is not a cry of amazement but of *admiration;* not a contemplation of obstacles, physical, moral, or spiritual, in the way of His plans, but a *joyous outlook* on the gracious purposes He cherishes; not an allusion to the demerits and crimes of Israel banished, but to the splendours, blessedness, and exaltation of Israel, by Divine grace restored. "How *will* I put thee?" (So all modern commentators.)

The words "Thou shalt call me, My Father," &c., do not furnish an answer to a foregoing inquiry as to obstacles; they are a continuance of the strain of *admiring contemplation.*

Ver. 20. "*Surely as a wife treacherously,*" &c. The remembrance of Israel's past conduct rises unbidden in the mind to cross, like a dark cloud, this bright hope of Israel's return to God, of its consequent restoration to its place as a child, and of its filial love to Jehovah. The prophet brushes away the passing doubt, and a vision of penitent Israel opens before his gaze.

Ver. 21–25. TRUE REPENTANCE.

1. *It proceeds from the inmost heart;* the *weeping* (ver. 21) and their *shame* (ver. 25) evince this.

2. *It is free from all dissimulation,* which might originate in a spirit of *compromise,* or be prompted by alarm at *consequences* of wickedness. Its principle is sorrow at having grieved God by the abuse of His love (see ver. 21).

3. *It is made known by the honest fruits* of repentance; *i.e.* apostasies healed (ver. 22), detestation of evil (ver. 24), and yearning for the Lord (ver. 25).

i. *Its form:* "weeping and supplications" (ver. 21). ii. *Its subject:* (*a.*) Forgetting God and sinning against Him (ver. 21, 25). (*b.*) The destruction resulting from sin's deceptions (ver. 23 *sq.*). iii. *Its object:* salvation in God (ver. 24).—*Homily by Origen; comp. Lange.*

Prayers and tears well become those whose consciences tell them that they have "perverted their way" (ver. 21).

1. They come devoting themselves to God as theirs (ver. 22).

2. They come disclaiming all expectations of relief and succour but from God only (ver. 23).

3. They come depending upon God only as their (true and rightful) Lord (ver. 23).

4. They come justifying God, judging themselves for their sin (ver. 24, 25).—*M. Henry.*

(See Addenda to chap. iii. ver. 24, 25, "*Shame.*")

Ver. 25. *Theme:* PROSTRATE IN ABASEMENT.

Guilt wastes the *sinner's substance* (ver. 24), as it did the younger son's when he rushed into prodigality.

But that is not the worst: it works *devastation of the soul;* spoils the character and dignity of the man. How dreadful that God's living "image" on earth, God's own nourished and beloved child, should thus "lie down in shame!"

I. An awakened sinner's self-abhorrent attitude.

1. Appalled at the heinousness of his sin.

2. Horrified at the indignity done to God.

3. Alarmed at the doom he has merited.

4. Overwhelmed by the grace he has experienced.

II. An adoring sinner's lowly approach to the Saviour.

1. To hide his whole past life in his forgiveness and atonement. For all his whole career "from youth even to this day" plagues him. He must quench the burning fire of his own memory in the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness."

2. To draw all his hope for the future from Christ. Having all along "not obeyed," his long-continued sinfulness has enslaved him; he cannot do the good he would. He must be saved from himself. "Lord, save *me*, or I perish." "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" &c. (chap. xiii. 23). (Addenda to chap. iii. ver. 25, "*We lie down in our shame.*")

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER III. ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 3. "*No latter rain.*" "Because we obstruct God's access to us, His beneficence does not reach us. We throw heaven and earth into confusion by our sins. For were we in right order as to our obedience to God, doubtless all the elements would be conformable. But as our lusts tumultate against God, as we provoke Him by our pride, perverseness, and obstinacy, it must needs be that all things above and below should be in disorder. This is to be ascribed to our sins."—*Calvin.*

Ver. 4. "*The guide of my youth.*" Are we walking through life as directed by our own mind and heart, or by the Word, Spirit, and providence of God? 1. *We are all travellers*—(*a.*) as to *time;* from youth to age: (*b.*) as to *place;* from cradle to grave: (*c.*) as to *circumstances;* from wealth to poverty or the contrary: (*d.*) as to *mind;* from ignorance to knowledge: (*e.*) as to *character;* improving or otherwise: (*f.*) as to *destiny;* to heaven or hell. 2. *We need a guide* who will cheer, sustain, protect, direct us on our way. God the only safe guide for the youthful traveller (Ps. xxv. 9, xxxi. 3, xxxii. 8; Isa. lviii. 11).

Ver. 7. "*Treacherous Judah.*" *Falsity; hypocrisy.*

"Satan was the first
That practised falsehood under saintly show."
—MILTON.

"An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the core.
Oh, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!"
—SHAKESPEARE.

"The dial of our faces does not infallibly show the time of day in our hearts; the humblest looks may enamel the former, while unbounded pride covers the latter. Unclean spirits may inhabit the chamber when they look not out at the window. A hypocrite may be both the fairest and the foulest creature in the world; fairest outwardly in the eyes of man, foulest inwardly in the sight of God. Unclean swans cover their black flesh with white feathers."—*Secker.*

Ver. 10. *External reform; ritual.*

"We make beautiful churches more often than we do beautiful Christians. We carve marbles, and rear fine proportions in stone; we decorate walls and altars; but these are only physical representations, material symbols, while the quality of beauty is in holiness. The beauty of love in all its infinite inflections, the beauty of justice and of truth, these languish."—*Rev. H. W. Beecher.*

"We are not to judge a man by the loudness of his profession. The one determining question is not 'Have you a label outside?' but 'Have you the grace of God in your heart?'"—*Dr. Joseph Parker.*

"*Feignedly.*" "It is possible for a man to have a pulpit, and to have no God; to have a Bible, and no Holy Ghost."—*Idem.*

Ver. 12. *The lost Ten Tribes.* The Beni-Rechab, sons of Rechab, still exist as a distinct and easily distinguishable people, in number about 60,000. They boast their descent from Rechab, profess pure Judaism; all understand Hebrew; live near Mecca.—*Comp. Grey's "Topica."*

There is a vast population in Afghanistan, of very evident Israelitish origin, their customs, traditions and names giving proof. The Jews of Bokhara themselves suggest that the Ten Tribes will be found in the vast interior of China.

Sir W. Penn traces them in the American Indians; others have recognised them in the Nestorians of Oroomiah, the Falashahs of Abyssinia. In British India there are many indications of their presence; *e.g.*, the Karens of Burmah, distinct from the Burmese, possessing traditions of the Fall, the Flood, and the Divine anger against their nation for worshipping idols.

Dr. Smith, however, remarks in his "*O. T. History*," that "The very wildness of the speculations of those who have sought them at the foot of the Himalayas and on the coast of Malabar, among the Nestorians of Abyssinia and the Indians of North America, proves sufficiently the hopelessness of the attempt."

"Like the dew on the mountain (Hos. xiii. 12),
Like the foam on the river (x. 7),
Like the bubble on the fountain,
They *are gone*, and FOR EVER."

Ver. 13. "*Only acknowledge thine iniquity.*" "Pardon can only be secured by the consent of both parties. I may have offended you. You may come to me and say, 'You have deeply grieved me; but I forgive.' I can snap my fingers in your face and say, 'Take your forgiveness away; I don't want to be forgiven by you.' Observe, therefore, that you have not the power to forgive me. You can forgive the crime, but you cannot forgive the sinner. But if I come to you and say, 'I have injured you; I see I must have given you pain; I did you wrong; I am sorry in my heart,' and you then say, 'With my heart I forgive you;' then the transaction is based on moral principles. It is so with God. God cannot pass an act of universal amnesty: He cannot open all the prison-doors of the universe and say to the criminals, 'Come forth; I forgive you all.' But if they in their condemned cells would but heave one sigh of penitence, and utter one cry for God's forgiving mercy, every bolt would fall off, every lock fly back, and there would be no prison in all the universe of God."—*Parker.*

ANCIENT HYMN, BY JOHN MARDLEY, 1562, ON JER. iii. 12–25.

"O Lord, turn not Thy face away
From them that lowly lie (ver. 25),
Lamenting sore their sinful life
With tears and bitter cry (ver. 21).

"Thy mercy-gates are open wide
To them that mourn for sin (ver. 13),
Oh, shut them not against us, Lord,
But let us enter in (ver. 12).

"We need not to confess our fault,
For surely Thou canst tell;
What we have done and what we are
Thou knowest very well (ver. 20).

"Wherefore to beg, and to entreat,
With tears we come to Thee (ver. 21, 22),
As children that have done amiss
Fall at their father's knee (ver. 19).

"Mercy, O Lord, mercy we seek,
This is the total sum:
For mercy, Lord, is all our prayer,
Oh, let Thy mercy come"! (ver. 22).

Ver. 16, 17. *Symbols of the spiritual.* "The time is coming when institutionalism shall be lost in spirituality; for the seer said, 'I saw no temple therein.' . . . Why should we have the sign when we have the substance? for He Himself is the Temple, and there needeth no outward building, no outward light. He is Temple, He is Light;—and when we stand before Him, all that is material, visible, and most helpful by the way, will be no longer necessary."—*Parker.*

"*Jerusalem, God's throne.*"

"Lord, Thou didst love Jerusalem,
Once she was all Thine own;
Her love Thy fairest heritage,
Her power Thy glory's throne:
Till evil came and blighted
Thy long-loved olive-tree,
And Salem's shrines were lighted
For other gods than Thee.

"Then sunk the star of Solyma,
Then passed her glory's day,
Like heath that in the wilderness
The light wind blows away.
Silent and waste her bowers
Where once the mighty trod,
And sunk those guilty towers
Where Baal reigned as God."

—Moore

Ver. 18. *Denominationalism.*

"I do not want the walls of separation between different orders of Christians to be destroyed, but only lowered, that we may shake hands a little easier over them."—*Rowland Hill.*

Vers. 24 and 25. "*Shame,*" cf. v. 3, "refuseth to be ashamed."

"Shame is a great restraint upon sinners at first; but that soon falls off; and when men have once lost their innocence, their modesty is not like to be long troublesome to them. For impudence comes on with vice, and grows up with it. When men have the heart to do a very bad thing, they seldom want the face to bear it out."—*Tillotson.*

The legend says, that a sinner being at confession, the devil appeared, saying that he came to make restitution. Being asked what he came to restore, he said, "*Shame:* for it is shame that I have stolen from this sinner to make him *shameless in sinning;* and now I have come to restore it to him, to make him *ashamed to confess his sins.*"—*Dictionary of Illustration.*

Ver. 25. *Sin debases the soul.* As Josiah in God's name desecrated and polluted the idolatrous altars in the land by burning dead priests' bones thereon (2 Chron. xxxiv. 5); so do transgressors against God degrade their spiritual nature, and profane the altar within their hearts which God intended for His homage and resting-place.

"*Even unto this day.*" "As it is never too soon to be good, so it is never too late to amend: I will, therefore, neither neglect the time present, nor despair of the time past. If I had been sooner good, I might, perhaps, have been better; if I am longer bad, I shall, I am sure, be worse."—*Warwick's "Spare Minutes."*

"*We lie down in our shame.*"

"Weary with my load of sin,
All diseased and faint within,
See me, Lord, Thy grace entreat,
See me prostrate at Thy feet;
Here before Thy cross I lie,
Here I live, or here I die.

"I have tried and tried in vain
Many ways to ease my pain;
Now all other hope is past,
Only this is left at last;
Here before Thy cross I lie,
Here I live, or here I die."—
WADE ROBINSON.

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—*Chronology* of the chapter, *Contemporary Scriptures, Historic Facts, Contemporary History* as in cap. iii. 1. Geographical References. Ver 5. "*Defenced cities.*" Some existed in Canaan before Israelites took possession (Numb. xiii. 28). Solomon erected others:—Tadmor, Gezer, Hazor, Bethlehem, Megiddo, &c. (1 Kings ix. 15–19). But Jerusalem, fortified by David (2 Sam. v. 7, 9, 10), was the chief stronghold of the nation (ver. 6). When Titus, later in history, besieged Jerusalem, he viewed with amazement, and expressed his admiration of, its impregnable strength (see Josephus *Wars*, Book vi. ch. ix. § 1). Ver. 11. "*High places in the wilderness:* ranges of bare hills by which the sandy deserts to the east of Palestine are intersected (Hend.). Ver. 15. "*Dan* and *Mount Ephraim.*" *Dan*, the most northern landmark of Palestine, the border town, at the foot of Mount Lebanon, near source of Jordan. Its original name, Laish (*cf.* Joshua xviii. 7, xix. 47); captured by a detachment of the tribe of Dan, who went thither to colonise, because the limited area assigned to the tribe was too strait for them: these gave the name Dan to the town. *Mount Ephraim*, a range of high lands, rounded limestone hills, broken up by intersecting luxuriant valleys, running through the territory allotted to the tribe of Ephraim: the name specially denoted the mountainous district ranging from Ebal and Gerizim southward to Bethel, in length about twenty miles. Thus *Dan* was the northern frontier of Palestine: *Mount Ephraim*, the northern boundary of Judea. Their connection here denotes that scarcely would news that the enemy had appeared at Dan (where the northern invaders would first show themselves) be published, ere the foe would, in rapid march, have penetrated to the very centre of the Holy Land, and scaled the frontier of Judea. Ver. 29. "*Climb up upon the rocks.*" The fastnesses of mountainous rocks proved secure asylums from hostile invaders; where also, unable to resist them in the open field, the Israelites made unconquerable resistance (Judges vi. 2, xx. 47, 1 Sam. xiii. 6, xiv. 4 sq., Isa. ii. 19, xxxiii. 16).

2. Natural History. Ver. 3. "*Fallow-ground:*" land left untilled, not touched by plough or sown with seed, for the Sabbatical year; hence *hard*, needing to be "broken up," and *overgrown with thorns*, which must be cleansed away. Ver. 11. "*Dry wind:*" the E. wind which was dry or withering (Ezek. xix. 12), or the Simoom, frequently mentioned in Old Testament,

which blew from the Arabian desert, blasting vegetation and human life: "*not to fan and cleanse*" the grain, but ravage and destroy. Ver. 13. "*Clouds and whirlwind:*" the Simoom raises "clouds" of sand and dust, which whirl up and cover the sky: these are the "chariots," and the hurricanes the "swift horses" suggested by the simile. "*Horses:*" the Chaldean cavalry, which were exceeding swift. "*Eagles:*" Xenophon tells us that the Assyrian armies (*ergo*, the Chaldean) bore *the eagle* with wings outspread as a military ensign upon their banners (*cf.* Hab. i. 8; Isa. viii. 8; Jer. xlviii. 40; Hos. viii. 1). So also the Persians, and the Romans after them. In Leviticus xi. 13, the eagle is ranked among the unclean birds.

3. Manners and Customs. Ver. 6. "*Set up the standard:*" to rally the inhabitants of the country around to the defenced cities for refuge from invaders. *Not* a military standard (דֶּגֶל) but a signal (נֵס) a flag, some well-understood beacon to warn or summon the people. Ver. 13. "*Chariots:*" formed a marked feature of Nebuchadnezzar's army (Ezek. xxiii. 24, xxvi. 7). Their invention has been attributed to Erichthonius of Athens, B.C. 1486; but Scripture shows that Egyptians used them earlier than that (Ex. xiv. 7; *cf.* 2 Kings xviii. 24). Solomon imported them from Egypt (1 Kings x. 28, 29). Ver. 16. "*Give out their voice against,*" &c.: the war-shout raised by armies when about to give battle. Instance in Judg. vii. 20. This was the custom with Hebrews, who also sometimes sang a war song (2 Chron. xx. 21) immediately before the attack. Greek armies did the same. Ver. 17. "*Keepers of a field.*" Watch was kept over pasturing flocks (Luke ii. 8) and over cultivated fields and plantations: these "keepers" constructed, for shelter from sun by day and security by night, booths (Job xxvii. 18); probably then, as now, a simple framework covered with branches of trees, and raised on four poles. These fields were surrounded by keepers placed at given distances, one of whom raised the cry on danger appearing, which the others in turn took up, till echoing voices sounded around the whole scene. With these booths are compared the tents of besiegers, and their cry over danger, with the war-shout of the foe. Ver. 20. "*Tents:*" the ordinary habitations of Israelites (2 Sam. xviii. 17): not only did the nomads like the Rechabites live in them, but the mass of the population engaged in pastoral pursuits (*Speaker's Com.*). Ver. 30. "*Crimson,*" a rich shade of scarlet, a deeper dye: "*ornaments of gold,*" rings in nose and ears, anklets, embroidered girdles, &c. "*Rentest thy face with painting:*" "face" should be "eyes." Among Eastern females then, and now, the custom prevailed of using a metallic ore, reduced to an impalpable powder, *stibium*, *cohol*, *antimony*, mixed into a paste with oil or vinegar, for darkening the eyes. A smooth cylindrical piece of silver, ivory, or wood, shaped like a quill, about two inches long, was dipped into the stibium, and drawn horizontally through between the closed eyelids. This increased the lustre of the eyes, imparted a jetty blackness to the edges of the lids, showing off the whiteness of the eyes to great advantage. Frequent use injured the eyes, making them look as if "rent." The eyebrows and outer angles of the eyes were by this "painting" artificially extended across the face, and the eyes apparently enlarged. Large dark eyes are regarded as essential to Oriental beauty.

> "There with a tiring pin their eyebrows dye,
> Till the full arch gives lustre to the eye
> That, trembling, darts lascivious glances."
> —JUVENAL'S SATIRE II. 137–40.

Xenophon describes it as a custom among the Medes in the time of the elder Cyrus: so great the antiquity and prevalence of this device of vanity. The earliest record of this custom is in 2 Kings ix. 30, Jezebel.

4. Literary Criticisms. Ver. 1. "*Not remove:*" Hend. Noyes and De Wette, "not be a fugitive." Lange, "then waver not." But Keil, Ewald, Hitzig, and *Speaker's Com.* regard the words as a second condition, "and strayest, or wanderest not:" *i.e.*, "if thou put away abominations, and wanderest not, and swearest by Jehovah, *then* shall the nations," &c. It requires abandonment of idols, the end of wanderings, the oath of fidelity. Ver. 5. "*Cry, gather together:*" rather, *make full*, meaning "*cry with full voice,*" aloud. Ver. 6. "*Retire, stay not.*" Hend. "flee for refuge, stand not still." *Speaker's Com.* "gather your goods together, linger not:" the same verb in Ex. ix. 19 used for removing property to a safe place. Keil, "save yourselves by flight." Sharpe, "flee in haste, stay not." "*I will bring.*" I *am* bringing. Ver. 12. "*A full wind:*" *i.e.*, a stronger wind than that which comes to winnow: "shall come *unto* me:" rather *for* me, as my instrument, to effect my purpose. Ver. 14. "*Vain thoughts:*" *i.e.*, *idolatrous*, *iniquitous* thoughts. אָוֶן =sin of idolatry: *cf.* Hosea iv. 15, v. 8, and the Heb. of Amos v. 5, where Beth-*el* (the house of Jehovah) is called Beth-*aven* (the house of idolatry). Ver. 15. "*Publish affliction:*" the same word as in ver. 14. אָוֶן here meaning *calamity*: this use of the same word links together *iniquity* and *calamity*. Ver. 19. "*At my very heart:*" translated as if the Hebrew words were idiomatic: but literally, "at the walls of my heart." Ver. 28. "*Without form and void:*" the same phrase as in Gen. i. 2. תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ; the primeval chaos reproduced. Ver. 24. "*Hills moved lightly:*" rather, *vehement motion.* הִתְקַלְקְלוּ, the violent agitations of mountains during earthquake. Ver.

29. "*The whole city:*" should read, either *the whole land* (Targum and LXX.), or *every city* (Keil, *Speaker's Com.*, &c). Ver. 30. "*And when thou art spoiled,*" &c. Omit italics in A.V. "And thou spoiled," *i.e.*, "And thou, O spoiled one:" viz. *Jerusalem:* addressed as a woman who decks herself in her best attire to attract lovers; although the masculine form שָׁדוּד is used: but Keil suggests, "it is to be regarded as adverbial, and so is without inflection;" Hend. suggests that עַם, *people*, denoting the inhabitants, is to be understood. Ver. 31. "*My soul is wearied because of murderers:*" Keil, "sinketh powerless beneath murderers." *Speaker's Com.*, "sinks exhausted before them." Noyes, "I am dying of murderers."

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER IV.

Section 1–4. Return to God would recover favours for Israel, and avert doom from Judah.
" 5–18. Judah refusing to return, her doom is graphically portrayed.
" 19–26. Jeremiah beholds the beautiful land utterly devastated.
" 27–31. Abandoned to judgment, yet not consigned to destruction.

Vers. 1–4. RETURN TO GOD RECOVERS FAVOURS, AND AVERTS DOOM.

Jehovah requires of the sinful more than return to *good habits*, or to *religious observances:* they must obey the call "Return to ME!" Man must come back to God Himself. It is *possible:* God *desires* it: and the *Way we know.*

I. **Securing God's acceptance must precede possession of God's inheritance.** "If thou wilt return [to thy inheritance in Canaan], O Israel, return unto *Me*, saith the Lord." Enemies cannot occupy God's cherished possession. It is a gift of grace, dependent on man's loyalty and love. Sin *forfeits all right* to it; *surrenders even the occupancy* (as Israel). 1. *Reconciliation is the pathway to privileges.* 2. *Repentance is the door to reconciliation.* 3. *God's favour is the qualification for Canaan.*

II. **Surrounding nations won to God by the event of Israel's conversion.** This is portrayed in Scripture as—1. *A great prophetic fact.* Israel's return will inaugurate the millennial glory, the ingathering of the nations to Christ. The world cannot become the Lord's until this event is realised. "All nations shall be blessed in Him:" when He "the God of Israel doth wondrous things" (cf. Ps. lxxii. 17–19; Rom. xi. 12–15). 2. *A grand perennial principle.* The same truth is constantly working itself out in present experience: society is awakened to seek Christ in seasons of *revival of the Church;* circles of acquaintance are impressed religiously by the *conversion of one* of their company; homes are won to Jesus by the *return of a single member* to the Lord. If true that "one sinner destroyeth much good;" equally true that one conversion effects wide and salutary results.

III. **Gathering fury against sin may be arrested by true Repentance (ver. 3, 4).** Clearly it is affirmed that—1. *Divine anger accumulates as human sin grows.* Thus prolonged guilt and excessive guilt "heaps up wrath against the day of wrath." Man feeds the fire, and heats its fury, by every act of sin. 2. *Divine anger may be appeased by sincere human contrition.* "God is angry with the wicked," but only as long as they persist in wickedness. That ended, anger ceases. It is not anger with the man apart from this evil quality; it is the man *plus his sin* who entails the displeasure. Sorrow in man's heart at once quenches the fire of God's displeasure. Horrifying as had been Judah's criminality, contrition would avert its just retribution. Hence, *the sinner's escape is conditional upon himself.* Will he deplore and desert his sin? *God may desire to save; may provide salvation;* but nothing avails until *sorrow awakes in the soul of man.* The yearning father forbears to embrace his boy until he "comes to himself" and *returns.*

IV. **Impenitence will eventually be punished with woful destruction.** There are three aspects of God's anger denoted. 1. It is *fiery:* "like fire," held in restraint now, but to "come forth," and burn with "fury" (Heb. xii. 29). 2. *It is unquenchable:* i.e., when once God lets it loose; it "will burn that none can

quench it" (Matt. iii. 12). 3. It is *merited;* "because of the evil of your doings." This will create in the sufferer's heart "the worm that dieth not," and occasion the "wailing and gnashing of teeth." Comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 17–20.

Vers. 5–18. Judah Impenitent: Her Doom Portrayed

Lange points out "Three Emblems" under which the coming disasters are here represented: First Emblem, the *Lion* (vers. 5–10): Second Emblem, the *Tempest* (vers. 11–13): Third Emblem, the *Keepers* (vers. 14–18). Modern German criticism has attempted to fix this prophecy on a Scythian, not Chaldean, invasion; which is affirmed, but wholly without historic proof, to have occurred in the 7th or 8th year of Josiah. It is the outcome of a rationalistic dislike of the supernatural element in prophecy: hence these critics first fix on an imaginary event, and then proceed to show that the prophet's words are mere "disguised descriptions of historical events" already past, or menaces of events clearly within the sight of a sagacious observer. [See Eichhorn, Ewald, Hitzig, Dahler, &c.] There is *no* historical evidence of a Scythian invasion of Judea. Heroditus (i. 103–105) records that the Scythians invaded Media, and dominated for 28 years over Asia: that they came to Syrian Palestine, on their way against Egypt, and that Psammeticus, king of Egypt, induced their withdrawal by giving them presents; and that they committed no violence beyond plundering the temple of Ascalon. There is abundant proof against even this having occurred in Josiah's reign. All the description is minutely suggestive of the Chaldean invasion; this was the Divinely-employed agent of Judah's overthrow. Her doom

i. *Solemnly forewarned* (vers. 5, 6) throughout the whole land; loudly and clearly; measures of defence counselled; haste and precautions advised.

ii. *Appallingly real* (vers. 7, 8, 13, 15, 16), whence ("the north;") savage (ver 7); swift (13); approaching (15); for war (16 "give out their voice").

iii. *Paralysing all resources of help and counsel* (vers. 9, 10); surpassing all expectation; rendering powerless all opposition; refuting all false promises.

iv. *Effecting God's purposes* (vers. 11, 12). It would be in effect God's "sentence;" righteous therefore and irrevocable.

v. *Bitterly retributive* (vers. 17, 18), the fruit of her severing herself from God's favour and protection; the penalty of her sin; bitter as death.

vi. *Salvation yet possible* (ver. 14). "Out of the heart are the issues of life." A cleansed heart would ensure salvation.

Vers. 19–26. A Mournful Vision: the Holy Land utterly devastated.

The insensate nation foresaw no calamity, feared no foe. Vivid as all was to the prophet's perception they dreamed on heedlessly; sleeping amid iniquity while sudden destruction sped towards them. He saw the sword, they mocked at his warnings. So Noah in his generation: so every prophet: so our Divine Lord: so the preacher of God to-day. His eye is open to nearing woe: but the people mock, despise and reject, repudiate warning, and betake themselves, besotted and blinded, to iniquity.

I. The Seer's anguish constrains him to speak (ver. 19). This throws light on

i. *The Seer's sufferings.* He feels what he foresees: his whole nature is wrung with grief at the vision which none but himself can perceive. The *finer the man's nature*, the keener his anguish. The *clearer his penetrations*, the more intense his sufferings. The *nobler his patriotism*, the heavier lies the burden of his nation's woe upon his heart. The *higher his piety*, the more bitter his grief over all.

ii. *The Seer's mission. Inwardly constrained*, he speaks out of a full and an agonising heart: "I cannot hold my peace." *Divinely enlightened*, he sees what

is hid from the people, and "cannot but speak the things he has seen and heard." *Loving his people*, he would fain shield them from the woe he forecasts, and "snatch them as brands out of the burning."

II. **The miseries of the perishing become the prophet's own** (ver. 20, 21). "*My* tents spoiled!" &c. This suggests the true attitude of God's messenger.

1. *Identification of interests* (Rom. xi. 1): himself bound up with them: suffering what they suffer. This is the real shepherding of the flock.

2. *Intense sympathy of soul.* He hears and sees all as if he were involved. There is no proud distinguishing and justifying of himself. He and his people are one. [*Addenda* ver. 19. *Prophet's distress.*]

III. **Rejection of God's messenger, the act of madness** (ver. 22). No uncommon incident. Every age rejects and ignores its benefactors, teachers, and saviours. The more evidently these bear the seal and dignity of God's messengers, the more "the world hates them." "If it hated *Me*," says Jesus, "it will you."

1. *Suicidal folly:* "My people is foolish, they have not known Me:" they frivolously ignored this man whom God had sent to speak to them.

2. *Besotted blindness:* "they are sottish children," &c. Their intelligence, discernment, and religious education, all were darkened by sin (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

3. *Spiritual perversity:* "wise to do evil," not naturally witless; "but to do good they have no knowledge," their religious nature brutalised.

IV. **The horrifying vision of gathering calamity described** (vers. 23–26). 1. *Appalling disorder and gloom.* (ver. 23); *i.e.*, the withdrawal of all peace and privilege in which God has established Judah. 2. *Terrifying overthrow* (ver. 24); *i.e.*, the casting down utterly and hopelessly of every natural stronghold in which Judah had been wont to trust, and thought to flee. 3. *All life perished* (ver. 25); *i.e.*, none should escape; calamity would fall on every one. 4. *Sacrilege and ruin* (ver. 26); nothing, however beautiful, cultured or revered, spared: lovely gardens, noble and wealthy cities, all gone. Nothing left of all human *trusts and treasures:* if, therefore, "without God," total loss (see Rev. vi. 12–17).

Vers. 27–31. Abandoned to Judgment, yet not Consigned to Destruction.

There is a reserve of mercy in all God's strokes; He softens the severity, keeps open the door of hope, makes a "way of escape." Stars shine, though obscured, through the stormiest night: and a promise may be heard even amid God's heaviest denunciations (Gen. iii. 14, 15).

I. **Merciless forces are under the Divine restraint** (ver. 27). Though the land should be desolated, yet "*I will not make a full end.*" The overthrow of Judah by the Chaldeans was God's work; and the limitation of the Chaldean policy of extermination was equally of the Lord.

1. *Their reckless implacability.* Look at the Chaldean army, it promised little restraint; it menaced with heedless, merciless destruction. Nebuchadnezzar seems to have organised into a consolidated army wild hordes of freebooters, mere relics of those nations Assyria had overthrown and absorbed. These he gathered together, and with them swept the lands (2 Kings xxiv. 1, 2, *cf.* Habak. i. 5–12). Little consideration or mercy from them!

2. *There is use even for them* in God's Providence. They are His scourge of rebellious Judah. So Habakkuk avers (i. 12); these very Chaldeans God "ordained them for judgment," &c. He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him.

3. *There is a limit* to their power and fury. "Yet will I not make a full end" (Comp. iii. 14). The ten tribes are lost, without national existence; greater nations than Judah disappear for ever—Nineveh, Babylon (Jer. li. 64), the Assyrians, Greeks, Romans. But the Jews are not annihilated. "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further." &c. God is mightier than mightiest forces; merciful

even when using merciless agencies; while "the end of the Lord is very pitiful" (Jas. v. 11).

II. **Divine plans lie behind all great events.** The rise and fall of empires, the downfall and enthronement of kings; all are according to the mind of Him who is King of kings, and doeth according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth. Here is shown that God regulates—1. *Even disasters:* such as to make heaven and earth mourn (ver. 28). 2. *Even victories of the wicked:* He permits these to triumph over the people whom God had once chosen; as Chaldeans over Judah "the house of David." 3. *Even the punishment of God's people:* sore afflictions, humiliations, and disasters which overtake us (ver. 29). 4. *Even the ruin of sinners:* God allows it; purposes it; and "will not repent:" so Judah was ruined!

III. **Rebellion reduced to ultimate defeat and despair** (ver. 30, 31). Slow indeed to yield to God, yet yield it shall.

1. *Even in her overthrow Judah sought other helpers, not God* (ver. 30). She sought by skilful and foolish appliances to win favour, to gain lovers, and so do without God, and avoid submission and repentance. Sinners will hold out against God to the last. Yes, even in the hour of affliction, of disaster and death, the "rebellious" will refuse to seek the Lord, or cry to the Crucified One to save.

2. *She realised at length her absolute and completed misery* (ver. 31). "The daughter of Zion bewaileth herself," &c. Observe: her grief and anguish is *not for her sin*, but for "herself"—"woe is *me* now!" for her *misery;* and also her *helpless, hopeless ruin:* "my soul wearied because of murderers." Such are the issues of rebellion: such the shame and woe to which the guilty are abandoned. God has reserved to Judah a last hope (ver. 27); just so, He calls to us "after so long a time." Heed ver. 14. [*Addenda* ver. 31. *Woe-stricken.*]

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* GOD GAINED OR HEAVEN LOST. "If thou wouldst return [to thine inheritance, thou must first] return unto Me."

I. **The alien outcast may return to God.** By conversion; renewal of heart; prayer for pardon and acceptance; humble faith.

II. **The far-off banished one may find God.** None too distant from Him to pray, to be heard, to be assured of acceptance, to be restored to the long lost love and peace and bliss. Israel in a strange country, removed from her land and altars and temple, could nevertheless seek Him in spirit.

III. **The returning soul shall be brought home.** When God is found, the soul back again in His love, heaven is sure to follow. God kept Canaan for Israel, keeps it still empty awaiting her return. Seek *Him*, not heaven; *He will give that.* Our sole concern is to find the Father. "It is His good pleasure to give us the kingdom." "Jesus said, I am the way, &c.: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

Theme: SIN BANISHED, OR THE SOUL BANISHED. "If put away abominations, thou shalt not remove;" *i.e.* (as some render it), no longer be a wanderer, an outcast in a far-off land. (Addenda ver. 1. *Banished recalled.*)

I. **Sin cannot dwell where God is.** And God dwelt amid Israel when she was "holiness" (ii. 3). Becoming guilty she was banished; remaining guilty she must keep afar from God. Our guilt *separates* us necessarily from Him (Isa. lix. 2). See instances of *conscious unworthiness* (Isa. vi. 5; Lk. v. 8).

II. **Sinners cannot possess God's heritage** (*cf.* 1. Cor. vi. 9, *sq.* Rev. xxi. 27). Retaining sin in the heart ensures *exclusion:* for it creates *unfitness*, and would incur the frown of God and the horror of the holy ones—thus depriving heaven of all heavenliness to the condemned soul. Any defilement, even hidden, would destroy in the soul the sense of *fitness* for God's glorious heritage, and make his existence *self-condemned:* this would desolate heaven

of joy. Only "the pure in heart can see God."

III. Sin may be separated from the soul. "Put away abomination" (*cf.* Isa. i. 18; Zech. iii. 4; xiii. 1, 2; Matt. i. 21; 1 Cor. vi. 11). Other methods have been tried: but "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Jesus only. (Addenda ver. 1. *Sin banished, or no heaven.*)

IV. Sinners may then have a right to the Divine presence.

1. *A right to enter* through the gates (comp. Rev. xxii. 14), where the proper reading is, "Blessed are they that have washed their robes, that they may have right," &c.

2. *Fitness to abide* in God's sight (Rev. xiv. 4, 5).

3. *Assured of endless rest therein.* "To go no more out." "Thou shalt not remove." "And so shall they be for ever with the Lord."

NOTE. If the words "thou shalt not remove" be rendered as with Henderson, "not be a fugitive," (comp. Gen. iv. 12–14). i. *The horrors of banishment;* ii. *The conditions on which that state may be reversed.* "Put away," &c.

Or if rendered, "then waver not" (Lange & Wordsworth) *i.e.*, be steadfast in thy repentance, or be prompt and firm and thorough in thy conversion. i. *Sin cannot be put away partially:* it is dishonest, revolting to God. ii. *Only resolute and entire repentance will avail before God.* He will accept us only then.

Observe how God views idols: "*abominations.*" He would have everything which interposes between the soul and Himself "put out of His sight." His *love* of man is such that He cannot consent to divided allegiance. His *loathing* of sin is so intense that He cannot allow it to remain under His eye.

Comments: Ver. 2. Concerning SWEARING BY OATH. "And thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth," &c.

The A.V. makes this verse unintelligible. The phrase, *The Lord liveth,* is the regular form of the Jewish oath, and means, not the thing sworn to, but the thing sworn by—*By the life of Jehovah.* But every nation swears by the highest object of its worship (Deut. x. 20, &c.), and the prophecy that Egyptians should swear to Jehovah (Isa. xix. 18), implied their conversion to the true faith. Here, similarly, the oath is a confession of faith in Jehovah, as the true God. (*Speaker's Com.*)

To *swear by Jehovah,* means to bind one's self by a solemn profession to adhere to His worship and service (comp. Deut. vi. 13; x. 20; Isa. xix. 18; Amos. viii. 14). And the profession should be not alone, or merely that of the lips, but accompanied with uprightness of heart and strictest rectitude of conduct.—*Henderson.*

Thou shalt swear, *not by thine idols* (Amos. viii. 14; Zeph. i. 5), but by the Lord; *not with vain oaths,* but for such causes, and with such conditions, as constitute a righteous oath (Wordsworth). A good oath has always these three concomitants—*truth, judgment,* and *justice.* If these are wanting, an oath becomes a perjury (Jerome). [Addenda ver. 2. *Thou shalt swear.*]

That we may not take God's name in vain, we must swear in:

1. "*Truth:*" commanded Lev. xix. 12: we must not swear falsely to perjure ourselves, *in assertion,* either *in cognito,* when we know, or *in dubio,* when we know not, nor *in promission,* when either we resolve not to perform, or do not perform.

2. "*Justice;*" which requires that we only swear *in honestis et possibilibus,* in things honest and possible; for that which is dishonest is not just, and an impossible matter is not at all to be sworn to. A thing impossible or dishonest is so, either from the very beginning, or cometh to be so afterwards. Thus Herod's oath was unlawful both in the making and the keeping of it; for in keeping it he added two other sins to that of *rash swearing: manslaughter* and *foolish superstition.* "When an evil thing is promised, cut the thread:" as David did (1 Sam. xxv. 22, 32).

3. "*Judgment:*" which requireth three things of us. (α.) That we take an oath reverently, not rashly, Eccles. v. 2. (β.) To take it as a holy thing, and there-

fore not make it common. (γ.) We must account it a matter spiritual, and not say, *juravi linguâ, mentem injuratam gero*, I swore with my tongue, my mind and intention were not sworn; for God will take that sense which the words carry. God so understands an oath as he who propounds it.—*Bishop Andrewes.*

Swearing by Jehovah involves the acknowledgment of His deity. For no one would swear by Him who was not convinced that He is the witness of truth and the avenger of falsehood. But to swear by others robs God of His glory and gives it to idols (Isa. xlii. 8). —*Lange.*

Theme: ISRAEL'S RETURN SHALL ALLURE THE GENTILES TO THE LORD. If Israel repents, it will become the means of making the Gentiles partakers of the patriarchal promise (Gen. xxii. 18). Two great truths taught: i. That the Gentiles were to be members of the Church of the Messiah; ii. That Israel's peculiar office was to be God's mediator in this great work.—*Speaker's Com.*

i. If the heathen "bless themselves" in Jehovah, they are become partakers of the salvation which comes from Him. ii. If this blessing comes to them in consequence of Israel's conversion, then Israel is the channel of their salvation. Israel's *apostasy* has delayed this: Israel's *conversion* is necessary to the completion of the Divine plan of universal redemption.—Comp. *Keil.*

When the long-deluded and spiritually-oppressed heathen come to "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent," they will indeed "*bless themselves*," for Christianity blesses its possessor; but they will "*glory in Him*," for it is a worthy fact for glorying that not vain idols are our gods, but that Jehovah is ours,—ours to trust, and claim, and love: that Jesus has redeemed, loved, and acknowledged us as His!

M. Henry says, If the scattered Israelites will thus return to God,—i. *They shall be blessed themselves*, for so ver. i. may read—brought back out of captivity to their own land (Deut. iv. 29, xxx. 2), or, shall return to Me as their rest even while in exile. ii. *They shall be blessings to others;* for their return shall be a means of others turning to Him who never knew Him; Israel would influence the nations, among whom scattered, to "bless themselves in Him," *i.e.*, shall find their blessedness in Him, shall join themselves to Him, and "shall glory" in the blessed change they have made.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* SOUL AGRICULTURE. "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns."

Frequent Scripture use of imagery of tillage as illustrative of soul-training. Agriculture, perhaps the oldest, most necessary, and best understood of all the arts: also, most suggestive of the moral culture of the human soul.

Three things essential to successful agriculture:

I. Proper attention to the SOIL. Analogy between the material soil and the human soul in two respects: there is—

1. *Variety of condition.* Christ speaks of the "wayside" soil, "stony places," "thorny ground," and "good ground." Their counterpart in men.

2. *Capability of improvement.* Farmer changes the character of the soil, bad into good: pulverises stones, mollifies the hard clay, burns weeds, &c. So hardened heart must be broken, thorny cleansed. Unless hearts thus prepared for truth, precious grain is wasted on them. But *can* men alter soil of their hearts? Yes: Commanded in text, "Break up," &c.

II. Proper attention to the SEED. In its *selection* and its *growth.* Soil might be good, yet if seed bad, harvest bad.

1. *Care in selection of true spiritual seed.* It is the Gospel: (*a.*) perfect in itself; (*b.*) fitted to grow in all climates; (*c.*) but it does not sow itself; (*d.*) it is the support of life.

2. *Attention must be also paid to its growth.* Carefully the farmer watches, specially the first stages; uproots weeds, scares off fowls of heaven. (Compare Matt. xiii. 25; Hos. viii. 7.)

III. Proper attention to the SEASON. There "is a time to sow;" a season

when the earth has its fecund power, and a time when it departs. And there are seasons for spiritual culture: 1. *Youth.* 2. The season of *moral seriousness*, when the heart has been softened. Many try when faculties are shattered, in old age, on dying beds. The time comes when the heart cannot grow Christianity.

Con.: Earnest in work of soul-tillage. Why? (*a.*) The field is in a deplorable condition (Prov. xxiv. 31). (*b.*) No work will prove so remunerative. (*c.*) There is no time to lose: "Go, work to-day in my vineyard."—*Condensed from "Homilist."*

Comments:

"To the *men of* Judah;" the word is sing., to *each man.* Every one is called to personal contrition. Repentance, reformation, religion, is imperative with each man singly: every one must prepare his heart and come back himself to God.

"*Break up fallow.*" The seeds of contrition must not be sown yet. Preparation is essential; it must engage anxious and watchful concern: not be done offhand; let it be attempted with utmost painstaking and seriousness. There must not be left one foul and thorny sin in the heart; it must be cleansed thoroughly. Only then will the repentance be real and permanent, and accepted by God.

Ver. 4. *Theme:* THE FIRE OF GOD'S WRATH. "Lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn," &c.

Sin ignites the unquenchable fire. *Impenitence invites* it.

I. God's fury is a terrible and a consuming reality. Not a shadowy menace, not a mere figure of speech, not an extravagance of fancy, but an appalling fact. The necessary counterpart and consequence of insulted and incensed love. It is a "*fire;*" it is a "*burning*" fire; it is a "*furious*" fire. It must be a fearful thing to encounter and endure!

II. God's fury is restrained that men may avert and escape it. "*Lest* my fury come forth." 1. God Himself is slow to let loose the terrors of His anger against sin. 2. Man has it in his own power to prevent its direful ravages. 3. Solemn forewarnings and appeals are Divinely sent that the wicked may escape. Compare *text* and *Nineveh's* conduct (Jonah iii. 5–10).

III. God's fury will eventually overtake the defiant transgressors. Disobey God's call to repent, abuse the opportunity of escape, and "the fury will come forth like fire." 1. *Historic occurrences* show this to be true (Gen. xix. 24, 25; Lev. x. 2; Numb. xvi. 31–35). 2. *Prophetic warnings* point to the same issues of sin (Matt. xi. 21–24, xxv. 41; Heb. x. 26, 27).

IV. God's fury once kindled can never more be quenched. Fire is the symbol of destruction. The declaration that "*none can quench it,*" implies *hope gone for ever,—ameliorations and escape* utterly lost,—irretrievably past. From that burning there will be *no Saviour to snatch us* as brands. Nothing can assuage its terrors,—none can quench its flames. Christ's redeeming work avails now, not then.

V. God's fury is the inevitable consequence of man's iniquity. "God *is* love;" and "loves the world" (1 John iv. 16). The Divine displeasure is created by man. God's *fury* is the *necessary indignation caused by sin.* And it must fall on the resolute sinner; for his sin has reversed the love, and left only this just anger. Alienated love means incurred wrath. Not that God *wills* it so (2 Pet. iii. 9); it is the issue of an inevitable law,—God's love estranged by guilt (for He cannot love where guilt is cherished), leaves nothing but the indignation against sin in the Divine heart towards the relentless sinner.

When, therefore, at the last, the sinner meets God, he calls forth, not love—he has estranged that—but the wrath he has kindled: "*because of the evil of his doings.*" "Flee from the wrath to come." (Addenda, ver. 4, "*Unquenchable fire.*")

Ver. 5–8. ALARM SOUNDED: FLEE TO THE STRONGHOLDS. (Addenda, ver. 7, "*The lion.*")

1. *The enemy advances* (ver. 7). The lion is rousing himself; already he has

left his lair. He is a "*destroyer*." He comes to "*desolate*" and to "*devour*" (1 Pet. v. 8).

ii. *Strongholds are accessible* (ver. 5). Leave the open country. Do not expose yourselves to the spiritual foe. Fortify yourselves in Divine securities. Mount the watch-tower; "strengthen the things that remain;" pray always; have faith in God; "resist the devil."

iii. *Zion the refuge from danger* (ver. 6). It was the strongest and best fortified of all the cities. Fugitives from the world, from sin, from pursuing foes, may hide themselves in Zion. The Church is a place of *defence*, of *security*, of *peace*: for God guards the walls, and the King reigns within. (Addenda, ver. 6, "*Zion a refuge.*")

iv. *The summons to safety* (ver. 5, 6). This the preacher's work. "And let him that heareth say, Come!" Everywhere perils menace the souls of men. 1. The *importunity* of the call (ver. 5). 2. The *inclusiveness* of the summons, — none excluded. All may hear and hide themselves from evil. 3. *The way of safety clearly pointed out.* "Set up standard towards Zion;" visible, unmistakable, direct. 4. *Urgent haste.* "Retire, stay not." "Now is the day of salvation." "Escape for thy life; tarry not in all the plain, flee to the mountains, lest thou be consumed."

v. *Bitter wailing over ruin* (ver. 8). Their fortresses are useless if God be not propitiated. In vain to hide from peril if God be ignored. 1. *Defences are delusions unless Christ is our Saviour.* 2. *Salvation is impossible unless Divine anger is averted by repentance.* 3. *Woful the overthrow of the spoiler.* 4. *We may "turn back the Lord's anger"* by fleeing to Christ (Isa. xii.).

Comments.

Ver. 9. i. *Ruin surpasses all anticipation.* The terror of the event paralyses all with amaze and dismay. Is there no forewarning in this? Will the future overthrow of transgressors be less appalling?

ii. *Helpers are found helpless in the day of calamity.* The rulers and leaders to whom the people looked prove their *impotency* when their aid is most needed, and their *perplexity* when their devices and resources should have been most ready. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man," &c.

iii. *Religious advisers whom God does not warrant and ordain* are seen to be *mockers and delusions* in the judgment, —"priests and prophets." The people despised the true prophet, God's messenger, and preferred their own idolatrous priests and temporising teachers. They "believed a lie," and "the storm shall sweep away the refuges of lies." Alas! this is still done (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4); and the dire result is ever the same (2 Thess. ii. 10–12).

Ver. 10. *Theme:* GOD REPROACHED AS THE AUTHOR OF MAN'S DELUSIONS. "Ah, Lord God! surely Thou hast greatly deceived this people, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul."

Frequently in Scripture the immediate cause and occasions of events are overlooked, and occurrences are unhesitatingly traced to the Divine First Cause. This is only in keeping with bold Oriental modes of expression. Thus God is said to have *hardened Pharaoh's heart* (Exod. iv. 21, vii. 3, 13, ix. 12); yet it is as emphatically recorded that Pharaoh himself hardened his own heart (Exod. viii. 15, 32. ix. 34). So concerning *Christ's crucifixion* (cf. Rom. viii. 32; Acts ii. 23), and equally concerning the *delusions of Antichrist* (cf. ver. 11 with ver. 12 of 2 Thess. ii.; their own hostile minds predisposed them to entertain delusions).

Inquire: *By whom* had God said, "Ye shall have peace?" Henderson suggests, by the *false prophets* who had prophesied, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace." Supporting this view, Keil appeals to the striking passages, chap. xiv. 13, xxiii. 17, and explains that God not only permitted these lying spirits to appear and work, but ordained and brought them forth for the hardening of the people's hearts; as in Ahab's case, that he might perish for his ungodliness (1 Kings xxii. 20–23). Most commentators prefer this view.

Dr. Payne Smith (*Speaker's Commentary*) prefers to refer the words of

peace to real prophecies of future blessedness promised to the Jews, and suggests that Jeremiah was perplexed with the twofold (and seemingly contradictory) aspects of prophecy, at times bright with promises of glory and power, at others dark with threatenings of national humiliation; and could not now reconcile the doom he now pronounced with his own previous prophecy, or with the predictions of his inspired predecessors. Prophets did not understand their own messages (1 Pet. i. 10, 11).

Lange remarks, this is only the opinion of the prophet (that God had deceived the people), who here interrupts the discourse revealed to him by the expression of his own subjective view.

Theme: WARNING AGAINST FALSE PEACE.

It is—(i.) *A lie*, for men say there is peace when the sword reaches even to the soul. (ii.) *A misfortune*, for it will disappoint the heart of those who cherish it.—*Naeg. in Lange.*

Theme: SORROW AND SURPRISE AT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR.

These words express deep disappointment at the frustration of a nation's hopes of peace, and at the mysteriousness of the Divine purposes. God cannot lie nor deceive, but His purposes go forward with a vastness of design and comprehension as to surpass the grasp of human calculation, thus deceiving those who had prejudged them. We find our wisdom to have been a phantom, our prophetic discernment a delusion.

I. Sadly, but truly, these words point out the real nature of war.

"The sword reacheth," &c. So it is wherever the consequences of war are felt. 1. It sweeps away the young and promising, cuts down the nation's bravest sons. 2. It discourages enterprise, and increases penury and want. 3. It blunts the moral feelings, deadens the conscience, and does violence to the gentlest and noblest inspirations of Christianity. 4. It depopulates and desolates the scenes over which it sweeps; as Nineveh, Babylon, Carthage.

II. How should we as Christians and patriots meet a time of war?

1. Implore God's blessings on our armies and our fleets, that they may be instruments in His hands for His ends. 2. Let prayer be accompanied by deep humiliation before God; for our sins, and the sins of our age, bring war. 3. Active and special benevolence should awake; for the calamities of the time will call for special succour. 4. Let us be found waiting God's will, not depressed by reverses, nor unduly elated by victory; but humbling ourselves under His mighty hand, that He may exalt us in due time.—*Part of Quebec Sermon, by Henry Alford, B.D.*, A.D. 1854.

i. *The delusive prophecy.* Guilesome voices speak flattery to sinners.

ii. *The agonising discovery.* "Sword pierceth," &c. Experience at length disperses delusions.

iii. *The reproach against God.* Unfounded; for He has clearly menaced evil with punishment. (Comp. ver. 18.)

Ver. 11–13. *Theme:* THE BLAST OF THE ALMIGHTY.

Winds, God created (Amos iv. 13), holds in His fist (Prov. xxx. 4), rideth upon them (Ps. civ. 3), lets loose (Jer. x. 13), Christ can quell (Matt. viii. 26; xiv. 32). (Addenda, ver. 11, "*Blast of the Almighty.*")

I. Winds can fulfil Divine behests. "Stormy winds fulfilling His word" (Ps. cxlviii. 8).

1. They travel where He directs. "Towards the daughter of My people" (ver. 11).

2. They awake to serve God's designs. "Shall come unto, *i.e.*, *for* Me" (ver. 12).

3. They carry out His sentence upon man. "Now, I will give sentence," &c. (ver. 12). Winds are God's judicial agents.

II. Winds are typical of human agencies.

The simoom was a figure of the mighty Babylonian conqueror. The "clouds" (ver. 13), were His armies;

the "whirlwind" His cavalry; suggesting that the Chaldean forces would be *numerous* (as clouds), *invincible* (as whirlwind), *swift* to overtake and seize the prey (as eagles).

Winds typify human agencies, in that they are:—

1. Variable; some "to fan and cleanse," others work "woe and spoil."

2. Wilful, yet controlled; "blowing where it listeth," as men obey their own impulses; as Nebuchadnezzar did in rising against Judea; yet obeying a Higher law and will.

3. Powerful, yet easily restrained by God. Mighty was this "full wind," yet Nebuchadnezzar (like Pilate) "could have no power at all, except it were given him from above." (Comp. 2 Kings xix. 7, 35.)

Stand in awe of Him whom "even the winds obey." *Rejoice* that "all power" is intrusted to Jesus, over nature, over men. *Safe* from harm, even amid mightiest agencies, are those He keeps. He is a *refuge* from wind, and all hostile powers. *Not befriended* by Him, "woe unto us" (ver. 13).

Ver. 14. *Theme:* PURITY NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

"Wash heart," &c. Apply primarily to Jews, but equally to mankind universally.

I. The natural depravity of the human heart. "Wash thine heart from wickedness," suggests the total corruption of human nature.

1. *This doctrine requires definition.* Depravity of the heart includes—(*a.*) The entire absence of the Divine image. (*b.*) A natural aversion to God and godliness. (*c.*) A universal propensity or disposition to evil.

2. *This doctrine demands evidence.* Cannot be denied without violation of conscience, contempt of reason, rejection of Scripture. (*a.*) It is divinely revealed. (*b.*) Practically exemplified. (*c.*) Deeply lamented.

II. The spiritual purity which the Lord requires. "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness; how long vain thoughts," &c.? Implies—

1. *The possibility of obtaining purity of heart.* This appears—(*a.*) From the design of redemption (Heb. ix. 13, 14). (*b.*) The ability of the Saviour (John i. 16; 1 Cor. i. 30). (*c.*) The promises of Scripture (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4). (*d.*) The experience of believers (Rom. vi. 22; 1 John i. 7).

2. *The important duty of seeking purity of heart.* This exhortation simply inculcates an immediate and diligent use of the means of grace necessary to salvation (Ezek. xviii. 31). (*a.*) We must repent of our sins (Isa. lv. 7; Acts iii. 19). (*b.*) Believe in Jesus Christ (Acts xxvi. 18; Heb. xii. 24). (*c.*) Give ourselves unto prayer (Ps. li. 10; 1 Thess. v. 23). (*d.*) Seek the Lord without delay. For "how long," saith God, "shall thy vain," wicked, unbelieving, impenitent "thoughts lodge within thee?" (Isa. lv. 6; 2 Cor. vi. 2).

III. The absolute necessity of personal holiness. "That thou mayest be saved." "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me:" purity and salvation go together.

1. *Personal holiness is a necessary property of religion.* Not consist of—(*a.*) Ceremonial observances (Gal. vi. 15). (*b.*) But dwells in the heart, sanctifying every power (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16). (*c.*) Without internal piety and purity, profession of religion is empty parade and profitless (Rom. xiv. 7).

2. *Personal holiness is a necessary meetness for heaven.* (*a.*) Reason assures us that there must be agreement between the faculty of enjoyment and the object enjoyed. God is holy; we must be to enjoy His presence. (*b.*) Scripture assures us that "without holiness no man can see the Lord" (Matt. v. 8; 1 Cor. iv. 9, 10).

These reflections should, (i.) *excite deep humility* and self-abasement in us as fallen sinners; (ii.) *promote an earnest application* to Jesus, whose "blood cleanseth from all sin."—*From "Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons."*

Theme: CHARACTERISTICS AND CORRECTIVES OF VAIN THOUGHTS.

Vanity of thoughts may prevail in persons who would be appalled at one

great substantial sin. Yet a month, year, a life of vain thoughts! in a being preparing for an eternity of seriousness and thought! it is truly an awful account! yet with many, this stands for little in comparison with some one or two very wrong external actions.

Observe: *What a mighty amount of thinking there is in human spirits that does not come under the censure of the text.* "Vain," implies something trifling, insignificant, empty. 1. It does not include *wicked* thoughts; impious, malignant, evil schemings, &c., these are not trivial; yet how much of this order of thinking! A man's thoughts are within his own jurisdiction, and may be concealed; he need not be exposed to censure and shame for them; unless, therefore, he govern himself in the fear of God, they will, in their mere animal play, run to *vanity*, if not worse. 2. If the thoughts are left unrestrained to commit folly, they will commit an immensity of it. The thinking power is never tired or exhausted in this frivolity. Never stagnant pool was more prolific of flies, nor the swarm about it more wild and worthless.

I. Characteristics of vain thoughts.

i. Those thoughts are "vain" from which we do not and *cannot reap any good.* Survey thoughts—excluding the noxious—and ask, Have they given me anything worth having; made me wiser; cleared away any previous ignorance; rectified any judgment; fixed or forwarded any purpose; or while ten thousand ideas have passed through my mind, might I as well have had none? These passing visitants have occupied his faculties and consumed his time; gone away and paid him nothing!

ii. Thoughts are "vain" which *cannot associate* in any agreement *with useful and valuable ones.* If serious and useful thoughts be admitted into a mind filled with frivolities, they are resisted and resented as intruders.

iii. Thoughts are "vain" which *have to be kept out* in order for the mind to *attend to any serious or good purpose.* Experienced this *necessity* and its *difficulty.* Like a man sitting down to study in a room filled with a moving, talking crowd. This mental mob has forced its way in, baffled and mocked you!

iv. Thoughts are "vain" which *dwell largely and habitually on trifling things.* Sad propensity to allow mind to waste itself on trifles; on personal display, fashion and routine, amusements, bubbling incidents on the stream of society. Would that some stern, alarming voice might break in upon such thoughts with, "What is all this to thee? hast thou nothing else to think of before thou die and appear before God?"

v. Thoughts are "vain" which *trifle with important ones.* Great things may be thought of idly as mere matters of curiosity and speculation, or to throw them into ludicrous and fanciful forms.

vi. Thoughts are "vain" *which are fickle,* not remaining with any continuance on a subject. In this ungoverned state, anything can divert thoughts: without regulated connection, no rational links, no leading to any ultimate object. Nothing is avoided, repelled, or selected.

vii. Thoughts are "vain" when the mind has some *specially favourite trifle,* some cherished idolised toy. Trifling in all but its power to fascinate and fasten itself upon a human soul! What shall we call this enslavement of the whole mind to some essentially worthless object of attention, but the *magnetism of Satan!*

viii. Thoughts are "vain" which *continually return to things* justly claiming a measure of attention when *the thinking of them can be of no advantage.* The mind wanders uselessly over the same enumeration, comparison, calculation; when nothing can be more useless.

ix. Thoughts are "vain" when the mind dwells on fancies of how things *might be* or might have been, when the reality of how they are is before us.

x. Thoughts are "vain" which men indulge concerning *notions and schemings of worldly felicity.*

Need of a corrective discipline; that we be earnest to have so pernicious an evil rectified, that our thinking and immortal spirits, which should be temples of the Most High, may not be the de-

graded recesses of every vanity with which the Spirit cannot dwell.

II. Correctives of vain thoughts. Evidently they—1. *Waste the activity of the thinking principle;* 2. They *put us out of the relation we are placed in to the highest objects and interests*—to God, Christ, eternity. 3. They unfit us for matters of practical duty, making life's true work irksome.

Observe: The evil habits of vain thinking is *utterly unsuited* to the condition of an immortal spirit on earth, and *fatally at variance* with its high destiny. It *might* suit a creature whose utmost scope is to amuse away a few years on earth, and then sink in the dust wholly and for ever!

Conscious that this vanity of thought is *a besetting evil*, we should earnestly desire any corrective remedy. But this vice of the mind is but a symptom of general degeneracy, and cannot be remedied without the grand *sources of our thoughts*—the passions and affections—be in a rectified state. There are no expedients which can avail independently of *resolute exertion*,—no dexterous device can cure this habitual propensity,—no wand of enchantment can wave off the infesting swarm. But, as *parts of a persevering discipline*—

i. *Have specified subjects of serious interest* to turn to when thought reverts to these vanities: recollections of a perilous situation, a dying scene, providential interpositions. These *memory* will furnish. *Conscience* offers subjects; what a man regards as his greatest sin, &c.

ii. *Make a sudden charge of guilt* on your mind when vain thoughts prevail. Enforce the thought "*God sees.*" This will act as a lightning flash which arrests levity.

iii *Have recourse to the direct act of devotion.* How will they appear when we confess and deplore them before God?

iv. Interrupt and stop them by *the question, What is just now my most pressing duty?* Judgment and conscience will then speak and chide for neglecting it.

v. Have recourse to *some practical occupation*, matter of business, or a visit to some house of mourning.

vi. *Constrain our habitual thinking to go along with the thoughts of those who have thought the best;* by reading the most valuable books. How lamentable the light reading of the age! Study the Bible.

vii. Think to a certain purpose,—*towards a purposed end.* What a number of things we need to aim at by a course of thought!

viii. Reflect on *how many things we have to do* with which "vain thoughts" interfere; and also, *what would have been the result of good thoughts* instead of so many vain?

ix. Discipline of the thoughts greatly *depends on the company a man keeps* (Prov. xiii. 20). Society can be found or avoided in which every vanity of the soul may be indulged or confirmed.

x. If the complaint be urged that this discipline involves much that is hard and difficult, we answer, It is just *as hard as to do justice* to a rational and immortal spirit placed here a little while by God for its improvement, and then to go where God appoints. *Hard*, yet so *indispensable.* How welcome, then, the *promises of the Spirit's help*,—the *invitations to pray!* We shall eagerly act on them if we care for our spiritual progress through this world, and our appointment and employments in the world to come. — *Lectures by John Foster*, A.D. 1822. (Addenda, ver. 14, "*Vain thoughts.*")

Comments:

Ver. 15. "*A voice declareth from Dan,*" &c. It is high time to set about personal cleansing, and for abandoning delusive thoughts, for already the calamity is announced,—it swiftly approaches,—it scales the heights which shelter Judah. (See *Geographical References.*) "The messenger comes from each successive place towards which the foe approaches."—*Hitzig.* (Addenda, ver. 15, "*Dan.*")

Ver. 16. The words should probably read thus: "*Proclaim ye to the heathen, Behold!*" (Saint Jerome points out that the heathen are hereby summoned to witness the chastisement of Jeru-

salem.) Thus they would learn that the God of the Jews had ordained the overthrow of His people; that it was not the triumph of impious and idolatrous forces against God and His people, but that He had consigned Judah to spoliation on account of her treachery and neglect of Him. This would prove a solemn warning to the nations around (ver. 17), giving clearly the explanation why God permitted Judah's foes to triumph.

Ver. 18. *The address reverts to Jerusalem:* against her Jeremiah had to publish (ver. 16) that watchers, besiegers, were advancing; it throws on Jerusalem the whole blame of the calamities. Here consider:

I. That sinners *have the power* of awakening terrible forces of judgment. "Thy way and doings have procured these things;" brought mighty armies, —devastating powers! Truly sin is a dreadful and prodigious factor in human history.

II. That sinners *inevitably entail* retributive miseries. "Unto thee." Sin awakes mighty forces—it *can* do that; but sinners bring those forces of misery *against themselves*, and they *cannot* evade them. The eagles *will* sweep down on the carcass they scent. (Addenda, ver. 18, "*Bitter at last.*")

III. That the *penalties of sin are unutterably distressing.* "It is *bitter*" (comp. ii. 19). "The wages of sin is *death.*" The miseries of the *siege* and *captivity* were but faint foreshadowings of the woes consequent on rejecting Christ and losing heaven.

IV. That the *wound and woe of sin reach to the very heart.* Neither is superficial nor evanescent, but the *rottenness* and also the *wretchedness* goes to the very core (ver. 10).

Ver. 19–21. *Theme:* A SEER'S ANGUISH OVER THE SINNER'S DOOM.

Henderson and Dr. Payne Smith, opposing all other commentators, regard these words as the outcry of *the anguish-stricken nation.* And truly the lost soul may utter such an exclamation of terror and grief in the hour of his judgment. Yet the words are more naturally the lament of the prophet.

I. The occasion of these impassioned outcries.

1. His grief was *patriotic;* distressed over the *national calamities* which were coming upon his people and his land.

2. His grief was *personal,* for he felt *individually* the shame and woe which the people's disloyalty to their God and their faith were entailing. By *identification of interest* he felt himself inculpated by their idolatries and vice; and by *intensity of sympathy* he felt the throes of anguish and ruin which ensued.

3. His grief was *pious;* the religious disasters looming over Zion filled him with amaze and sorrow. Temple defamed and razed; Judah reduced to captivity, land laid waste, sanctities of his nation profaned; and more, *Jehovah* contemned by the victorious heathen, who would scorn the God of the land they subdued, and of the people they oppressed.

II. The lessons of the prophet's distress. Moses's distress over sinning Israel as he descended Sinai, the Psalmist's deeply troubled state over transgressors (Ps. cxix. 136, 158), our Lord's pitying tears at the sight of doomed Jerusalem, Paul's "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" for his kinsmen (Rom. ix. 2, 3), and Jeremiah's pathos of lamentation, encourage and summon us to godly sorrow over the guilty and the perishing.

1. There is enough of wrong around us to evoke saddest emotions.

2. Philanthropy and compassion for humanity should move us to deepest sorrow.

3. Fellowship with Christ will make us deplore the devastations of sin.

4. The keener our sense of right and our love of God, the more intense will be our repugnance towards, and our distress over, scenes of iniquity.

5. Memory of our own redemption will awake in us bitter regrets that others remain sunken in wrong and the woes of wrong.

6. Perception of the foul agency which triumphs in human overthrow

will deepen our revulsion and horror. It was the king of Babylon in Judah's case — imperious, blasphemous, implacable; it is the "adversary the devil" in our case now.

Hence: 1. The shamefulness of indifference towards others in peril. 2. The inarticulate call to our commiseration which comes from *souls* despoiled. 3. The urgency of faithful warning and friendly help, though it cost us suffering and sacrifices, as with Jeremiah. 4. The grandeur of Christ's mission; His love and redemption. 5. The inspiration which lies in the fact that there is hope of our doing good even to those who hate us while we seek their welfare.

They who feel for the woes of others, and seek to redress them, cannot fail to fulfil a ministry of amelioration, and shall not miss the reward of loving service and patient suffering (Matt. v. 12).

Ver. 22. *Theme:* JUDAH'S DIVINELY-SENT TEACHER IGNORED.

I. Teachers are valueless unless men will be listeners. But "my people are foolish." Indifference to the teachings of Jeremiah was suicidal, wilful, shameful. So is the disregard of the world.

II. Man's heedless attitude frustrates God's messengers. They would arouse men to their peril and point them to escape and redemption, but they put life and salvation from them.

III. The insensate spiritual condition of transgressors. (*a.*) *Blinded*—"not known me," whom God in mercy sent. "Have no understanding" of their peril, value of Divine messages, urgency of seeking salvation. (*b.*) *Debased* — mentally, "foolish;" morally, "sottish;" foolish heart darkened (Rom. i. 21, 22). (*c.*) *Perverted*—their spiritual nature distorted, thrown into calamitous confusion and contrariety; wise in evil, witless respecting good.

Hence easily deluded, wilfully ignorant, lamentably degenerate. (Comp. John iii. 21.)

Ver. 23–26. A SOLEMNLY-SUGGESTIVE VISION.

The prophet sees bursting over Judah a visitation which convulses the whole world. In the vivid poetic language of this picture, the mind is led back to what earth was *before creation*, and led forward to what earth will become *at the judgment*. It suggests that sin gathers into the present the dreary desolations of the past and the terrible devastations of the future.

I. Chaos reproduced. (Comp. ver. 23 with Gen. i. 2.) Thus—1. Sin defaces scenes of beauty (comp. Gen. i. 31); alas! all again in chaos. 2. Sin despoils the Spirit's work; He brooded over and beautified earth (Gen. i. 2). 3. Sin enwraps the world in gloom—shuts out light, God, hope, and happiness.

II. Judgment depicted. (Comp. ver. 24–26 with Rev. vi. 12–17.)

Jeremiah glances again into the awful future, and—1. He beholds the material world in wild convulsion (ver. 24, comp. Rev. vi. 14). 2. Scenes of the living changed into sepulchral solitude (ver. 25, comp. Ezek. xxxviii. 20). 3. The works and memorials of man swept away: plantations and cities (ver. 26, comp. 2 Pet. iii. 10). 4. God's presence awakens a panic of terror (ver. 26, "*at the presence*," lit. *from the face of Jehovah, from the face of the heat of His nostril*; comp. Rev. xx. 11, vi. 16, 17).

It is as if the final judgment of the world had already arrived. Infer—1. Retribution must not necessarily be deferred till the distant judgment-day. 2. In a sinner's downfall, the horrors of the final judgment are all realised. 3. If God be not propitiated, His presence will terrify us whenever it appears—in temporal calamities, hour of death, or day of retribution. 4. Flee now to God; not then from God. (Addenda, ver. 26, "*Broken down at the presence of God.*") *Lowth* remarks: "These particular judgments are an earnest of the general judgment."

Ver. 27–29. Lest it should be thought the prophet has spoken only under strong poetic feeling, an extravagant imagination, there comes the emphatic, "*Thus hath the Lord said.*" It is not fancy, but solemn fact.

I. God's irrevocable purpose (ver. 28). "I have spoken; not turn back." The day of redemption past,—probation terminated,—escape impossible,—repentance no avail.

II. God's avenging decision limited by His mercy (ver. 27). "Yet not make full end." This always attested of Judah: the sword should not wholly destroy. (Comp. Lev. xxvi. 44; Amos ix. 8.)

III. Earth clad in woful mourning (ver. 28). The heavens shrouded in sombre clouds in sympathy with earth's misery. (Comp. Rev. vi. 12, i. 7.)

IV. Hiding-places sought: strongholds abandoned in despair. Their refuges prove insufficient, insecure, as will all human strongholds. When these defenced "cities" fail, the recesses of forests and mountains will be sought. Implies: (*a.*) Great terror of the foe. (*b.*) Deliverance will then be craved, redemption sought too late. (*c.*) No evading the judgment; flight will not ensure escape.

V. Melancholy desertion of happy scenes (ver. 29). "Every city forsaken," &c. Homes gone for ever. Scenes of plenty and pleasure abandoned perforce. Families driven from earth's fond scenes into exile. So at the judgment—but worse.

Ver. 30. SPOILED YET ADORNED. Jerusalem simulates the beauty which has been "spoiled" in the vain hope of attracting to her side the succour of Egypt against Chaldea. (Addenda, ver. 30, "*Finery, Flattery.*")

i. *Vain devices for covering misery.* "Clothest with crimson," "deckest with ornaments of gold," paintest thine eyes. Real wealth never feels the necessity of gaudy parade. True beauty never resorts to artificial decorations. Implies conscious deformity and penury.

ii. *Adversity transforms flatterers into foes.* "Lovers seek thy life." This shows the character, the worth, the treachery of ungodly confidences. Turn from God to them in prosperity, they will turn from or turn upon their dupes in their evil day.

iii. *Forlorn attempts to regain love win loathing.* "Despise thee." Their "love" was only for self-aggrandisement; it was sordid and selfish; now nothing can accrue to them from Jerusalem she is contemned. Yes; and her despicable efforts hypocritically to hide her miserable plight create nausea and revulsion. Even the ungodly hate deceit, loathe decorated deformity.

Ver. 31. The LXX., Syriac, Vulgate, &c., take the participle as passive, and render, *My soul faints because of the slain.* Better as in A. V.; or, My soul is overpowered before murderers.

"*Spreadeth her hands.*" A pleading gesture, expressing a prayer for protection: as she falls before assassins she beseeches help.

"*Woe is me now!*" Her full and irremediable wretchedness is at last realised by her; she cries out terrified by her perils and pains. Yet *not to God.* Therefore none befriends her. (Addenda to chap. iv. ver. 31, "*Woe-stricken.*")

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 2. *Topic:* AN ANCIENT HOMILY "ON SWEARING." *Text:* "*Thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth,*" &c.

I. The command. Did Christ countermand this? (Matt. v. 34). The Son forbid in the Gospel what the Father bids in the law? *Jerome* says, "Oaths were permitted the Jews of policy, because they heard heathen swear by *their* gods." But the explanation which accords both commands is: God bids thee swear, so thy oath be truthful and needful; Christ forbids swearing which is truthless and needless. Christ came not to destroy the law; He but forbids the gloss of the Pharisees, who taught oaths were not perjury though false, so that they swore not by God's self directly. Yet also. Christ would have His followers' tongues so true as they shall

not need to swear. Holy men's words are oaths. The abuse of swearing God abominates, man abhors. But not everything that is abused by wicked men must therefore not be used by sober men. Schismatics are they who have refused oaths; Essenes among Jews, Anabaptists among Christians. *Bullinger* saith, "He is not worthy the name of Christian who refuseth to swear by the name of Christ." For, what do I when I swear, but call on God to be either witness to my truth or avenger of my falsehood? I therein confess the Lord to be my God,—I acknowledge His truth, justice, and omniscience.

Precedents from Scripture:—Moses swore (Josh. xiv. 5). David often—to Saul. to Jonathan. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob did—patriarchs before the law; and Paul. after the law and under the Gospel, swore. Christ used His "Amen, amen;" and *God* "swore by His own self." What He bid, He did.

Oaths, *public*, as between princes and before magistrates. and *private*, as between man and man, are lawful, so the swearer take them with religious heart and in cause important. He takes God's name in vain that swears when he needs not, and "God will not hold him guiltless."

II. The form. God bade us "*swear*;" now He tells us how: "*The Lord liveth!*" It is, then, impiety to swear by creatures; grand sacrilege to swear by anything but God. The name of a strange god was not to be heard in the mouth of God's people (Exod. xxiii. 13). Saith the old man in *Aristophanes*, "He but jests that swears by Jupiter." To swear by anything but God lessens the religion of an oath. When the Jews swore by Baal, and the Gentiles by Jupiter, they thought them gods, for they prayed and sacrificed to them; yet Baal was but a beast, Jupiter but a man. *God prevents all evasion* by the name He here gives, "*the Lord*;" not any god the swearer would substitute,—as Papists swear by angels, called in Scripture, "*Elohim*," and superstition worships them as gods. Many forms are used by men of Scripture variable from this form, but in all the meaning is, "The Lord liveth."

III. Three particulars. "*In truth.*" Perjury is impious,—makes that which is the sign, ensign, and seal of truth, the cloak of falsehood. It was death with the Egyptians; *St. Augustine* would have it so with Christians too. "God will destroy," saith David, "all that speak lies." What will He do to them that swear lies? The Pope, Christ's vicar, panders perjury! Swear promissorily fealty to thy sovereign, the Pope will assoil thee; forswear assertorily anything to the magistrate, the Pope will pardon thee. Faith is not to be kept with heretics. Equivocation is even commended. How dare thou dally with God before whom thou swearest? He is not mocked! An oath is a hedge to fence thy faith: break it not; thou betrayest thy truth: leap not over it; there is a pit behind it, without bottom,—it is hell.

"*In judgment.*" Swear not upon guess only,—oaths must not be adventured Some swear where no cause is, no gain is, no gainsayer is, but only of bad use. *Augustine* saith, "The world hath many evil customs, but this of swearing is bad above all that is bad." It makes God's holy name vile, and engenders perjury. *Philo* saith, "Oaths are no tenise balls to toss upon the tongue."

"*In righteousness.*" To any act against right or religion bind not thyself, let not any bind thee. Oaths must not cross either piety towards God or charity towards men. Such an oath was Herod's: much better had he broken his oath than slain a prophet. Bind not two sins together. It is sin to make it, not to break it. Saint *Jerome* saith of unlawful oaths, "It is condemnation if thou break them; it is damnation if thou keep them."—*Condensed from Sermons by Rev. Richard Clerke, D.D.*, one of the translators of the English Bible, preacher in Canterbury Cathedral. Dated A.D. 1637.

Ver. 3. *Topic:* UNFIT SOIL PREPARED FOR THE BLESSING. *Text:* "*Break up your fallow ground.*"

A call to vigorous preparation for spiritual blessing. Many are conscious of earnest longing for salvation, more grace, spiritual renewal and revival; but "the desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour." A delusion to rest with desire.

I. Hardening forces have been acting on the soil. "Break up:" hard, therefore. "*Your* fallow ground;" seriously inquire to what this applies *in you*.

1. *What is the fallow ground within man?* 1. The heedless mind. 2. The callous heart. 3. The seared conscience. 4. The irreverent soul. 5. The formal Church: first love dead, flame extinct, sanctuary a garnished sepulchre. (Addenda, ver. 3. "*Fallow ground.*")

2. *How has your ground become fallow?* 1. By neglect: becomes hard itself; need do nothing. 2. Action of time: years find you harder. 3. The cold of indifference. 4. Rains and sun cake the soil; the Saviour's action, the Spirit's influence make the unyielding soul more alien.

II. Sowers can only work on lands which are prepared. They are forced into inactivity by the ground being fallow.

1. *The sowers are Christ, the Spirit, the preacher, the worker for human salvation.* They can only sow the Gospel where they find the soil clean and ready. This is the husbandman's command (Luke x. 10–12). Your stolid unconcern is an effectual obstacle.

2. *All spiritual agencies are thwarted by unpreparedness.* Seed may be the best, but useless on hard soil. Sun may shine, but not germinate. Rains fall, only to wash the seed off. Best Christian appliances, services, sermons, &c., no avail.

3. *Therefore, where there is no readiness, the sacred blessings are withheld.* "Christ did no mighty works because of unbelief."

III. Sowing time is the season for gathering in the living seed. Do nothing to anticipate the auspicious hour of grace, and it will come and find you unfit to receive the Gospel, the salvation God would willingly give. Make ready for the Lord.

1. *There is a special time of grace.* 2. *The season quickly passes by.* 3. *It may come to us in vain.* It was *now* with Jerusalem; she was not ready to benefit by it. Later on, when Jesus "wept over the city," she "knew not the day of her visitation." We may awake to righteousness *too late;* the sowing-time past, the "convenient season" gone.

IV. The plough must be driven through the sterile soil. Sowers are waiting, seed is ready, season is here and passing (text). 1. *Put the plough through your indifference;* rouse yourself into attention. 2. Through your *indecision;* "How long halt ye?" 3. Through your *inaction;* bestir yourself; read, pray, repent, reform. 4. Through your *habits of sin;* weep for them, desert them; listen to chidings of conscience; open heart to the Saviour who knocks. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while near," &c.

All this will not make you spiritually renewed. Ploughing does not ensure the harvest, yet it is *preparation for it.* It is your part; and God requires that part of you. "He hath commanded all men everywhere to repent;" "Break up," &c. It will not be done for you; it must be done by you. "Prove me now herewith, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven," &c.

Ver. 14. *Topic:* THE VANITY OF THOUGHTS. (*Ancient Homily.*) *Text:* "*How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?*"

Heart compared to house, to entertain and lodge guests; into which, before conversion, all the light, wanton thoughts that post up and down in the world

have open access—lodgeth them; while they, like unruly gallants, revel day and night, and defile those rooms they lodge in. "*How long?*" whilst I, with my Spirit, and Son, and train of graces, stand and knock, and cannot find admittance? Those vain guests must be turned out of doors without warning; "the time past must suffice." *Kept out* they cannot always be; yet if they enter, "lodge" they must not. "Let not the sun go down on your wrath," or a worse guest may enter; "neither give place to the devil." Bad thoughts may pass as strangers through a believer's heart, making a *thoroughfare* of it, but not a lodging-place.

I. What is meant by thoughts.

i. *The internal acts of the mind;* reasonings, resolutions, consultations, desires, cares, &c. 1. The thinking, meditating, musing power in man, which enables him to conceive, apprehend, fancy. 2. Thoughts which the mind frames within itself (Prov. vi. 14; James i. 15; Isa. lix. 4–7). These differ from thoughts injected and cast in, which are children of another's begetting, and which do not become ours unless we "lodge" them. 3. Thoughts which the mind in and by itself begets and entertains.

ii. *Let us see what vanity is.* 1. Unprofitableness (Eccles. i. 2, 3). 2. Lightness (Ps. lxii. 9). 3. Folly (Prov. xii. 11). 4. Inconstancy (Ps. cxliv. 4, cxlvi. 4). 5. Wicked and sinful (2 Chron. xiii. 7; Prov. xxiv. 9). Such qualities are linked to the word *vanity*. Vain thoughts *are sins*. 1. The law judgeth them (Heb. iv. 12; 1 Cor. xiv. 25), and Christ rebukes them (Matt. ix. 4). 2. They are capable of pardon, and unless pardoned we cannot be saved (Acts viii. 22). 3. They are to be repented of (Isa. lv. 7; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5). 4. They defile a man (Matt. xv. 15–17). 5. They are abominable to the Lord (Prov. xv. 26). 6 They hinder and spoil all the good we should do (Isa. xxix. 16). Our thoughts are the first motioners of all the evil in us.

II. The particulars wherein this vanity of the thinking, meditating power of man consists.

i. In regard to *thinking what is good.* 1. *A want of ability* to raise and extract holy and useful considerations and thoughts from the occurrences and occasions which surround us. (Comp. Ps. cvii. 43 with Ps. xcii. 4–6.) 2. *A loathness to entertain holy thoughts.* (Comp. Ps. cxix. 59 with Rom. i. 28.) 3. The mind *will not long be intent on good thoughts.* 4. If the mind doth think of good things, it doth so *unseasonably;* intrudes on prayer and interrupts it (Prov. xvi. 3).

ii. The readiness of the mind to *think on evil and vain things.* 1. This vanity shows itself in *foolishness* (Mark vii. 22), which proves itself in the unsettledness and independence of our thoughts. 2. On the other hand, if any strong lust or passion be up, our thoughts are *too fixed and intent.* 3. A restless *curiosity* concerning things not affecting us (1 Tim. vi. 4, 20, iv. 7; Prov. xv. 14). 4. Taking thought to fulfil the lusts of our flesh (Rom. xiii. 14). 5. Representing, or *acting over, sins in our imagination* (Jude 8).

Having discovered the vanity of your thoughts and estate thereby—1. *Be humbled for them* (Isa. lv. 7). 2. Let *us make conscience of them for ever* (Prov. iv. 33), dreading the revelations of the judgment (1 Cor. iv. 5). After the judgment men's thoughts will prove their greatest executioners.

III. Remedies against vain thoughts. (Addenda, ver. 2, "*Thou shalt swear,*" &c.)

1. Get the heart furnished and enriched with a good stock of sanctified and heavenly knowledge in spiritual truths (Matt. xiii. 35; Prov. vi. 22; Deut. vi. 6, 7).

2. Endeavour to preserve and keep up lively, holy, and spiritual affections in the heart (Mal. iii. 16; Ps. cxix. 97).

3. Of all apprehensions else, get the heart possessed with deep and powerful apprehensions of God's holiness, majesty, omniscience, and omnipresence (Ps. cxxxix. 1–12).

4. In the morning when thou *awakest*, as did David (Ps. cxix. 18), prevent the vain thoughts the heart naturally engenders by filling it with thoughts of God.

5. Have a watchful eye upon thy heart all day; though vain thoughts crowd in, let them know that they pass not unseen. Vagrant thoughts will not make their rendezvous where strict watch is kept. Complain of them; whip them if they will pass in.

6. Please not thy fancy too much with vanities and curious flights (Job xxxi. 1; Prov. iv. 25).

7. Be diligent in thy calling (2 Thess. iii. 11; 1 Tim. v. 13); only encumber not the mind too much (Luke x. 41).

8. In thy calling and all thy ways commit thy goings to the Lord (Prov. xvi. 3). A few thoughts of faith would keep us from many thoughts of cares and fears. When such waves toss and turmoil the heart, thoughts of faith bring calm and rest.—*Condensation of a Homily by Rev. Thomas Goodwin, B.D.* Dated A.D. 1638.

Ver. 19. *Topic:* The Prophet's Lamentations over his People's Doom. (*Ancient Homily.*)

Jeremiah travails with the miseries and calamities of his people, and bemoans them, to draw his people to the same affections and dispositions with himself.

I. The complaint or lamentation itself. We have three particulars—i. *The parts affected.* Signify the soul and inward man. Gregory Myssen regards them as "the intellectual and discursive faculty of the soul." Because of: 1. The *secrecy* of it, the mind and soul being inward and hidden. 2. Because the mind *receives and digests* the thoughts. 3. The mind is *the mother of thoughts*, conceiving and generating them. ii. *The grief of those parts.* "Heart is pained," &c., both as to the *kind* ("pained") and the *effect* of the grief ("heart maketh noise in me"). From which infer: 1. God need not go far for the punishment of wicked men; He can do it from *within themselves;* punish a man with *his own affections and thoughts.* 2. What good cause we have to regulate and control our affections, avoid passion and excess of emotion, take care to be pacific, and enjoy a sabbatic tranquillity in our spirits. iii. *The passage or vent.* "I cannot hold my peace." Passion will make way, and force itself forth. It did here in: 1. The speech of *discovery;* for *he cannot help revealing* these workings of his own spirit. God's ministers find a necessity in themselves to discover their thoughts to their people (Jer. xx. 9; Job xxxiii. 18–20). Moreover, *love constrains him hereunto* (Acts xx. 20), that his weeping and mourning might be a forerunner of theirs: also the *consideration of his calling*, as watchman and guide, urged him to give warnings of sin and judgment. 2. The speech of *lamentation:* he must bewail and utter complaint, his anguish was so great (as Job vii. 11).

II. The ground or occasion of his lamentation. "Because," &c. i. *The tidings or report itself.* "Sound of trumpet, alarm of war." This not literally in a military case. 1. *The trumpet of Providence.* 2. *The trumpet of the Word* (Isa. lviii. 1). 3. *The trumpet of vision*, or extraordinary prophetical revelation. ii. *The conveyance of it to the prophet.* "Thou hast heard, O my soul." 1. *The soul through the corporeal organ of hearing.* 2. *The soul immediately*, as being that which had communion with God. 3. *The soul emphatically;* that is heard indeed which is heard by the soul. Hence (*a.*) *God's excellency:* He speaks. (*b.*) *Man's duty:* he hears. iii. *The improvement or use he makes of it.* 1. *His meditations aroused his affections.* (*a.*) This is the aim of a revelation. (*b.*) We should endeavour to bring revelations for others to our own spiritual advancement and profit. 2. *What these affections were which the tidings aroused.* (*a.*) *Anger* at his people's obstinacy. (*b.*) *Fear* of the coming judgment. (*c.*) *Grief* at his people's state and doom. Yet there was *no such thing yet* as war among them; nevertheless the *certainty of it* pained him. To shut up all: 1. *We see how prophets and*

ministers should be affected in themselves by the threatenings and denunciations of judgment. 2. *We learn how all should be affected by Divine warnings.* If so dreadful in apprehension, what will it be in the infliction? 3. *Let us endeavour to meet God by speedy and unfeigned repentance* (Amos iv. 12).—*Abstract of Sermon by Rev. Thomas Horton, D.D.* Dated A.D. 1679.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER IV. ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. *Sin banished, or no heaven.* "The first physic to recover our souls is not cordials, but corrosives; not an immediate stepping into heaven by a present assurance, but mourning, lamentation, and a bitter bewailing of our former transgressions. With Mary Magdalene, we must wash Christ's feet with our tears of sorrow before we may anoint His head with the 'oil of gladness.'"—*Browning.*

A poor man told Rowland Hill that the way to heaven comprised three steps: "*Out* of self, *unto* Christ, *into* heaven."

When Ben's master died, they told him he had gone to heaven. Ben shook his head. "I 'fraid massa no gone there." "But why, Ben?" "'Cos when massa go North, or go journey to the Springs, he *talk about it long* time, and *get ready.* I never hear him talk about going to heaven, never see him get ready to go there."

"I know the way to heaven," said a little girl to her brother. "Do tell me," the boy answered. "Well, just *commence going up*, and keep on going up all the time, and you'll get there. But, Johnny, you *must not turn back.*"

The banished recalled:—

'Driven from their home, their pathway lost,
'Mid clouds that came upon the world's fair morn,
By gloom and shadows cross'd,
Wandered a race forlorn.

'There sat One o'er heaven's highest hall,
Who, in str nge charity, to exile went
These exiles to recall
To that, His heavenly tent.

"He gave Himself, their staff and stay,
To feeble knees, strength to the sinking soul;
He was Himself the Way,
He was Himself the Goal."

—FROM THE LATIN.

Ver. 2. "*Thou shalt swear,*" *&c.* "Every time, whenever thou shalt find thyself to have let slip an oath, punish thyself for it by missing the next meal."—*Chrysostom.*

"It is great sin to swear unto a sin,
But greater sin to keep a sinful oath.
Who can be bound by any solemn vow
To do a murderous deed, to rob a man,
To reave the orphan of his patrimony,
To wring the widow from her custom'd right;
And have no other reason for this wrong,
But that he was bound by solemn oath?"

—SHAKESPEARE, 2 *Henry VI.* v. 1.

Ver. 3. "*Fallow ground.*" Illustrates: 1. Culture of the Church (1 Cor. iii. 9). 2. Of the heart. The longer we leave the heart uncultivated the harder to break up. If we do the tilling, God will rain righteousness (Hos. x. 12). Break it up with thought, soften it with repentance, plant it with truth.—*Topics for Teachers.*

"Have you ever read the 'Ancient Mariner?' I dare say you thought it one of the strangest imaginations ever put together, especially that part where the old mariner represents the corpses of all the dead men rising up to man the ship,—dead men pulling the ropes, dead men steering, dead men spreading sails. But I have lived to see that time: have seen it done. I have gone into *churches* and have seen a dead man in the pulpit, a dead man as a deacon, a dead man holding the plate, and dead men sitting to hear."—*Spurgeon.*

Ver. 4. *Unquenchable fire.* A finger of lightning will write on the sky, "For ever!" and the thunder-peal echo among the crags of death, "For ever!" O those fire-bells will never stop ringing, because the conflagration will never be done! (2 Thess. i. 9.) It is not I, but God says it.

Sir Francis Newport, in his last moments, caught a glimpse of the eternal world; he looked into it before he entered it. The last words he uttered were, "Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell!" The lost soul will cry, "I cannot stand

this; is there no way out?" And the echo will answer, "No way out for ever!"—*De Witt Talmage.*

Ver. 6. *Zion a refuge.* "I wish they were within the enclosure where the boar out of the wood could not waste them nor the wild beast of the field devour them."—*H. Ward Beecher.*

Ver. 7. "*The lion.* Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, whose monarchy is represented by a lion (Dan. vii. 4). He is called "the destroyer of the Gentiles," or rather "nations;" Judea and all the neighbouring countries being given up into his hands by God's decree (Jer. xxv. 9, xxvii. 6).—*W. Louth.*

Ver. 11. *Blast of the Almighty. Thevenot* mentions the death of 20,000 men who perished in one night by one of those burning winds. *Sir J. Chardin* describes this wind as making a great hissing noise; that it appears red and fiery, and kills those it strikes by stifling them. *Maillet* mentions its being felt in the desert between Egypt and Mecca, in part of which Israel wandered forty years.

A party of travellers in the desert were overtaken by the fierce simoom. Like blinding snow driven by the winds of March came the hot sand. Before the simoom had reached its height, they came suddenly upon a rude building of stone, well protected with roof and doors, which the hand of charity had erected there for shelter. With joy they rushed into it, closed the doors, and were safe. (Comp. Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.)

Ver. 14. "*Vain thoughts.*" "If the flow of a day's mind-and-heart experiences were written, it would be a volume, and one's life a Bodleian Library; but the 'book of remembrance' is yonder, and the life is daguerreotyped on the sensitive pages of the future."—*Beecher.*

"In hotter climates, the locusts swarm so thickly in the air as sometimes to hide from the traveller the light of the sun, and cast a cold, dark shadow on his pathway. So it is in the world of mind: swarms of vain thoughts are ever floating over some minds, intercepting the beams of truth from falling on the heart, and thus keeping that heart barren of all virtue and goodness."—*Rev. R. Roberts.*

"'Tis not in things o'er thought to domineer.
Guard well thy thought; our thoughts are heard in heaven." —YOUNG.

Ver. 15. *Dan.* "In consequence of a large portion of the canton of Dan continuing in the possession of the Philistines, it was found too small for its population, and 600 Danites, with their families, emigrated to the northern extremity of Palestine, attacked Laish, a Zidonian city near Lebanon, took possession of it, and changed its name to Dan. This place is notorious in sacred history as the spot where Jeroboam established his golden calves (1 Kings xii. 29), and as the place which Nebuchadnezzar first seized on his invasion of Canaan."—*Paxton's "Sacred Geography."*

Ver. 18. "*Bitter at heart.*" On the walls of one of the Egyptian temples is said to be the inscription, "The impious shall commit iniquity without recompense, but not without remorse."

"Through many a clime 'tis mine to go,
With many a retrospection curst;
And all my solace is to know,
Whate'er betides, I've known the worst.
What is that worst? Nay! do not ask;
In pity from the search forbear.
Smile on: nor venture to unmask
Man's heart, and view the hell's that there." —BYRON.

"'Tis very true, my grief lies all within;
And these external manners of lament
Are merely shadows of the unseen grief
That swells with silence in the tortured soul:
There lies the substance."
—SHAKESPEARE.

Ver. 19. *Prophet's distress.* "God's ministers must have their hearts fired, not with passion, but with love. The thunderbolt may crash, but the sun melts. It is better to love as a pastor than speak as an angel."—*Watson,* A.D. 1649.

Ver. 26. "*Broken down at the presence of the Lord.*" "Oh, that you might all be stirred by a dread of the Almighty! I announce to you the judgment to come; it shall break upon the earth, that day of wonder and of terror, when from the sea, and the mountain, and the desert shall swarm the buried families

of the human kind, and the dead shall stand before their God: no shelter for the proud, no mask for the hypocrite, no standing-place for the presumptuous." —*Melvill.*

Ver. 30. *Finery: Flattery.*

"Ah! when the means are gone that buy this praise,
The breath is gone whereof this praise is made.
Feast-won, fast-lost; one cloud of winter showers,
These flies are couch'd."—SHAKESPEARE.

"All that glitters is not gold;
Gilded tombs do worms unfold."—*Idem.*

Ver. 31. *Woe-stricken.* "The world affords not a sadder sight than a poor Christless soul shivering upon the brink of eternity. To see the poor soul that now begins to wake out of its long dream, at its entrance into the world of realities, shrinking back into the body and crying, *O I cannot, I dare not die!*" —*Flavel.*

"Come home, wandering, tired, grieved soul! Love where thy love shall not be lost. Love Him that will not reject thee, nor deceive thee, nor requite thee with injuries as the world doth. God will receive thee when the world doth cast thee off, if thou cast off the world for Him!"—*Baxter.*

CHAPTER V.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the chapter. The description here of unblushing immorality and total disorganisation leads Kimchi and others to date this chapter after Josiah's times; but it is not necessary; ostentatious reform and superficial religion may be synchronous with abandoned impiety and grossest corruption. Matthew Henry boldly puts an interval of twelve years between the fourth and this chapter, two years after Josiah's death, but without argument or evidence.

2. Cotemporary Scriptures. 2 Chron. xxxv. 1-19; 2 Kings xxiii. 1-27; Zeph. i.-iii.; and, probably, Nahum and Habakkuk.

3. National History and Cotemporary History, as chap. iii.

4. Geographical References in this chapter. Ver. 1. "*Broad places of Jerusalem*," open spaces just within the gates of the city, places of concourse, the markets, &c. (See on chap. i. 15). Ver. 22. "*The sand for the bound of the sea.*" Seas known to the sacred writers were—1. *Mediterranean*, situate in the middle of the then known regions of the earth, separating the three great continents Europe, Asia, and Africa; 2320 miles by 1080 at extreme measurements, 5000 feet deep at Straits of Gibraltar, inhabited by over 440 different species of fish, called the *Great Sea* (Num. xxxiv. 6, 7), *Sea of the Philistines* (Exod. xxiii. 31). On its shores were situate the mightiest empires of the world, Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, Roman. Western boundary of Palestine. 2. *Red Sea*, a huge gulf of the Indian Ocean, interposed between Egypt and Arabia; 1400 miles by 150; area, about 180,000 square miles; depth, about 6000 feet; divided at northern end into Gulf of Suez, 190 miles by 20, and Gulf of Akabah, 112 by 15; between these gulfs lies the peninsula of Sinai. 3. *Dead Sea*, inland sea; believed originally to have been a huge basin in the channel which connected the Mediterranean and Red Sea; situate south-east of Palestine, 48 miles by 10 at extreme measurements, 300 square miles area, depth about 1300 feet, and the surface 1300 feet below level of the ocean. 4. *Sea of Galilee*, also called Sea of Tiberias, north-east of Palestine, 700 feet below level of Mediterranean, 12 miles by 6, depth about 700 feet.

"How pleasant to me is thy deep blue wave, O Sea of Galilee!
For the glorious One who came to save hath often stood by thee."

5. Personal Allusions. Description of the *Babylonians* (ver. 15). "*Mighty* nation," called (l. 23), the "hammer of the whole earth;" "*ancient* nation," the empire was founded by Nimrod soon after the Flood (Gen. x. 8, 10, xi. 4, 9). Isaiah suggests (xxiii. 13) that the Chaldeans were a younger branch of that venerable stock, yet to earliest times their origin is traceable, when they were one of the Cushite tribes (Dr. W. Smith), a fact proved by the relics of their language, which, as a dialect of Babylonia, was retained in use as the learned language for scientific and religious literature (Dan. i. 4). Henderson states that originally they inhabited the Carduchian Mountains and the northern parts of Mesopotamia, and afterwards migrated into the Babylonian territory; "*whose language*" the Jews knew not, nor could understand, either because the Chaldee, though only a dialect of the Hebrew, was so different in its words and construction as to be foreign to a Jew, or (as Henderson suggests) because the

people had retained their native Cushite tongue, probably the mother of the present Kurdish a language totally different from any of Semitic origin, in close affinity with the Persic.

6. Natural History. Ver. 6. "*Lion*" (see notes on ii. 15, iv. 7). "*Wolf of the evenings:*' formerly abundant in Palestine, now seen occasionally: character and habits described Gen. xlix. 27. Inferior to lion in strength and to leopard in courage, yet if possible more rapacious and fierce (especially in the evening) than either (Habak. i. 8); generally chooses as his prey the weaker animals, lambs and kids; his depredations destructive in the extreme, for he assails not only what his ravenous hunger craves, but every living thing he meets. He "dwells alone, shunning even his own species, except for occasional combined attack." "*Leopard shall watch over cities:*" predacious (Hos. xiii. 7); swift (Hab. i. 8); "has a ferocious air, a restless eye, a cruel aspect;" is very nimble in his movements, swift and subtle, gluttonous and rapacious. Homer says the leopard can never be satisfied with prey (Paxton's "Natural History").

Ver. 17. "*Vines and fig-trees.*" "*Vines*" (notes on ii. 21). "*Fig-trees:*" very abundant in Palestine (Deut. viii. 8); a single tree would produce 280 lbs. of figs.

Ver. 24. "*Former and latter rain*" (see *Critical Notes* on iii. 3). "*Weeks of harvest:*" seven weeks which intervened between the feasts of Passover and Pentecost (Deut. xvi. 9). Barley harvest began quickly after Passover; wheat, which ripens later, was reaped just before Pentecost, at which sheaves were offered (Exod. xxxiv. 22). Rain never fell during those weeks (1 Sam. xii. 17; Prov. xxiv. 1; Amos iv. 7). The regularity of weather and seasons was consequent upon a special Providence and covenant promises (Deut. xi. 11–14). The climate and seasons are now very uncertain; for the Providence has been alienated, and the covenant withdrawn because of sin (Deut. xi. 17).

7. Manners and Customs. Ver. 1. "*Executeth judgment:*" see *Lit. Crit.* below. Ver. 5. "*Broken the yoke and burst the bonds*" (see notes on ii. 20); implement of husbandry; three Hebrew words translated *yoke*, מוֹט, מֹטָה, and עֹל; the last here. Ver. 10. "*Walls and battlements:*" the old wall began on the north of Jerusalem at the tower called Hippicus, and terminated at the west cloister of the Temple: its southern direction was over the pool of Siloam to the eastern cloister of the Temple. Josephus says there were sixty towers on this wall. The city was divided into the High Town on the west, and the Low Town on the east. When David acquired possession of both, he "built the city round about, even from Millo round about" (2 Sam. v. 9); and "Joab repaired the rest of the city" (1 Chron. xi. 8), *i.e.*, the High Town; connecting the two divisions of the city together, and surrounding the whole with fortifications (Josephus Antiq. VII. iii. 2). These walls of David were strengthened and elaborated by Solomon (1 Kings iii. 1, xi. 27). Josephus says that Solomon "having repaired the walls of Jerusalem, made them much greater and stronger than they were before" (Ant. VIII. ii. 1); and that "the walls that encompassed Jerusalem might correspond to the dignity of the city, he both repaired them and made them higher, and built great towers upon them" (Ant. VIII. vi. 1). Ver. 16. "*Quiver:*" Layard's "Monuments of Nineveh" represent the enormous and powerful bows carried by the Assyrian warriors. The bowmen and cavalry formed the main strength of Chaldean armies. "Quiver" was the case in which each soldier packed and carried his arrows, and was probably slung over the shoulder. Ver. 17. "*Impoverish thy cities:*" see *Lit. Crit.* below. Ver. 27. "*Cage full of birds:*" "cage," כֶּלוּב, rendered in Amos viii. 1, "basket," because made of wickerwork: in this birds were secured by the fowler, and the door left open as a *decoy* to birds which were free, who no sooner entered than the door fell.

8. Literary Criticism. Ver. 1. "*Executeth judgment:*" lit. *doing right;* no allusion here to conduct of public judicial officers, but to general behaviour of men. "*Seeketh the truth:*" not verbal, but *practical* truth; *i.e.*, integrity, good-faith, truth in actions. Ver. 3. "Upon the *truth*," *i.e.*, practical truth (as in ver. 1); fidelity as opposed to falseness (ver. 2) Ver. 4. "*Therefore:*" too vigorous a rendering; *then, and.* Ver. 6. "*Wolf of the evenings:*" עֶרֶב, *evening*; עֲרָבָה, *desert:* the word here is a plural form עֲרָבוֹת. The prevailing conclusions of commentators derive this plural from, עֲרָבָה; thus, *wolf of the deserts:* but Gesenius gives this plural from עֶרֶב, *evening;* and De Wett, Hend., and Noyes retain *wolf of the evenings.* Ver. 7. "*How shall I pardon?*" more correctly, *What reason, why should I, how can I?* "*Though I fed them to the full:*" thirty-three of De Rossi's MSS., the Sept., Vulg., Syriac, Arabic, Tayum, and many expositors, ancient and modern, retain this reading from the word וְאַשְׂבַּע; appealing to v. 28 and Deut. xxxii. 15; Hos. xiii. 6; Neh. ix. 25, as parallels; where bountifulness of earthly enjoyments issued in apostasy. But the word should be וְאַשְׁבִּיעַ, *and I made them swear:* the preponderance of existing MSS. supports this pointing, and most modern commentators prefer it; *i.e.*, God made them pledge allegiance to Himself; both originally at Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 7), and recently during Josiah's reforms (2 Kings xxiii. 3; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 7 *seq.*). Ver. 8. "*Fed horses in the morning:*" a difficulty with the word rendered "in the morning." This derives מַשְׁכִּים from שָׁכַם, *to rise early in the morning.*

Hitzig traces the word to מָשַׁךְ, *to draw*; hence "draught horses." Ewald, altering the word to מְשֻׁקִּים, gives "*lustful horses.*" But the safer and most preferable derivation of the word is from שָׁכָה, the Hiphil particle; *to wander* (Maurer, Keil, Umbriet, Speaker's Com.), "*they rove about.*" Ver. 10. "*Walls and battlements:*" *battlements* is a false rendering: *tendrils, i.e.*, of the vine (ii. 21) or *branches* (Isa. xviii. 5). The *walls of the vineyard* are to be scaled, and while the stock of the vine is to be spared, all her tendrils are to be torn or hewn off. Ver. 12. "*It is* not he," *i.e., not God*, who has spoken of judgments; therefore the menaces were false, "wind" (ver. 13); or "*He is not*," *i.e.*, there is no God to punish as is predicted (Ps. xiv. 1). Ver. 13. "*Thus shall it be done unto them*," or, *so be it done;* may the calamities they threaten come upon the prophets themselves. Ver. 15. "*A mighty nation:*" the word signifies *perennial*, as of an ever-flowing stream, or *enduring*, as rocks; the same word is used of both. "*An ancient nation:*" מֵעוֹלָם, *from eternity*, of immemorial antiquity. Ver. 17. "*Impoverish cities,*" break in pieces, *batter down: "with the sword,"* with weapons, or by *force of arms.* Ver. 28. "*Yet they prosper*," rather, *that they may prosper, viz.*, the "fatherless." Ver. 31. "*Rule by their means:*" lit. *at their hand;* Sep. and Vulg. suggest, "*the priests applaud with their hands*" the false prophecies of peace: the Syriac, "*held their hands,*" *i.e.*, strengthened and supported the false prophets. Rather, *at or under their hands;* the priests rule as the false prophets direct.

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER V.

Section 1–9. A profligate people ripe for vengeance.
„ 10–19. Forewarning despised, judgment prepared.
„ 20–25. Solemn reasons for fearing God.
„ 26–31. Spiritual criminality of most hideous form.

Ver. 1–9. A Profligate People Ripe for Vengeance.

The facts: not an upright or godly man could be found in Jerusalem (ver. 1, 2). All were spiritually incorrigible and defiant (ver. 3). Excusing the poor in part, because of their spiritual ignorance, it was yet found that the rich and learned were insolently impious (ver. 4, 5). All this necessitated direct punishment and destruction (ver. 6). God could discover no ground for pardon or pity in their case (ver. 7, 8). Vengeance must fall on them (ver. 9).

I. **Lenient conditions of pardon** (ver. 1). Find a good man, and I will pardon the city! 1. *Appalling corruption of society.* Either: (1.) *Though many esteemed themselves good and pious, God saw all to be vile.* Or: (2.) *If any were true and righteous he dare not openly show his religion* (Isa. lix. 14). 2. *Easy terms of mercy.* God asked "*ten* righteous" in Sodom: but would spare Jerusalem for *one!* (1.) *How He loved and desired to spare the city.* (2.) *How slow to anger and of great kindness.*

II. **Blasphemous show of piety.** Though utterly iniquitous, *the profession* of religion had not been abandoned (ver. 2). 1. *It gratified and quieted their conscience.* 2. *But it incensed the God of truth* (Isa. xxix. 13; Prov. xii. 22).

III. **Hardened resistance of God** (ver. 3). Their gross irreligion was not because God had not done all He could to restrain and correct them. Yet He whose "eyes are upon the truth" saw only falsity. 1. *God had afflicted them in mercy;* but the "stroke" awakened no penitential response. 2. *God had corrected them with severity;* but they resisted the design of the Lord in thus "consuming" them. Instead: 3. *They fortified themselves against God and His judgments.* And 4. *Deliberately refused to return to Him.*

IV. **Prevailing social corruption** (ver. 4, 5). 1. *From the lowest grade to the highest society was godless.* 2. *Ignorance or knowledge altered not their case;* "the poor *know not*," &c., but "the great *have known* the way of the Lord;" yet from the least to the greatest every one was evil (chap. vi. 13). The poor blindly wander, but the rich are blasphemously wilful: but so it was, "all flesh had corrupted its way." What a catalogue of sins is here given! Ver. 1. Total ab-

sence of integrity in public life; ver. 2, Hypocrisy in religion; ver. 3, Incorrigible hardness of heart; ver. 4, Degradation of the poor; ver. 5, Debauchery of the rich; ver. 7, 8, Shameless idolatry and frightful immorality. Surely these had sunk to the "*depths* of Satan."

V. Righteous punishment threatened (ver. 6). 1. *Its nature definitely known to God;* for He fixes positive consequences to sin; not merely gives the sinner up to indefinite miseries. 2. *Its severity fully determined.* For "every one," therefore none shall elude it; "torn in pieces," therefore none shall outbrave it. 3. *Its justice unquestionable;* "*because* their transgressions," &c. God's dealings even with rebels are not arbitrary or extreme: He lets each transgressor mete out his own misery by the decision of merit.

VI. An insulted God avenged (ver. 9). 1. *Can any challenge the justice?* What are "*these things*" to which God makes appeal? (1.) God's own children had forsaken Him (ver. 7). (2.) Openly identified themselves with idols. (3.) Violated His laws. (4.) Utterly polluted the homes and the city (ver. 7, 8). 2. *Can any suggest reasons of mercy?* (1.) Should such *vileness* be tolerated? (ver. 7, 8). (2.) Ought such *falsity* to be connived at? (ver. 1, 2). (3.) Can any Divine *correction* avail? (ver. 3). (4.) Are there any who merit to be spared? (ver. 1, 4, 5). (5.) Is the judgment heavier than is deserved? (ver. 6). 3. *Can any hope to evade God's vengeance?* (1.) *Not by subtle devices and deception* (ver. 2, 3). (2.) *Yet by penitential pleading for pardon* (ver. 1). (3.) *Calvary is our sole hope.*

Ver. 10–19. Forewarning Despised: Judgment Prepared.

Multitudes are ruined by fancying that God will not be so strict to punish iniquity as His Word forewarns (ver. 12). This was Satan's first snare laid for man (Gen. iii. 4); and men easily fall into it still. Sinners are ready to deny a message to be from God which troubles them in, and would drive them from, their sins (ver. 13).

I. God disowns them (ver. 10). "They are *not the Lord's*" (see Lit. Crit. on "battlements"), *i.e.*, such vile outgrowths from the stock of David God will not regard as His people. 1. They *acted deceitfully* with God (ver. 11). 2. They *talked defiantly* against God (ver. 12, 13), showing—(1.) An *absence of reverence or regard for God Himself*,—"it is not He," rather "He is not" (see Lit. Crit.); (2.) *Utter heedlessness of God's Word*,—mere "wind" (ver. 13); 3. They *wickedly menaced God's messenger* (ver. 13),—"Thus shall it be done," &c. This filled up the measure of their iniquity (Matt. xxiii. 30-33). Thus had they ruthlessly *broken every link* that united them with the Lord, and *defaced every feature* which identified them with Him and His true people. "Now, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, *he is none of His*" (Rom. viii. 9). "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 23).

II. God dooms them. Jehovah speaks, and there is a dreadful "*wherefore*" determining His utterance; it is a *deliverance of Judah to wrath.* 1. *The threatenings they derided shall devour them as fire* (ver. 14), burn within their consciences and memories,—the fire never to be quenched: an inward terror at the wrath of God should consume them as wood, burning up their complacency, their fearlessness, their hopes, their delusions. 2. *The foe they disregarded should waste and ruin them.* (1.) *Protection and defences should fail;* "walls" scaled (ver. 10), "fenced cities" destroyed (ver. 17). (2.) *A scourging adversary should desolate them;* God would *bring* it, for He commands nations to do His will (ver. 15). (*a.*) Dreadful in itself (ver. 15); (*b.*) terrible in war (ver. 16); (*c.*) wasting the country (ver. 17); (*d.*) destroying the cities (ver. 17); (*e.*) implacable in slaughter (ver. 6).

III. God deserts them (ver. 19). As they had deserted Him. "With what measure ye mete," &c. 1. *Sinners dare to challenge the justice of God in their*

overthrow (ver. 19, comp. Matt. xxv. 44). 2. *God justifies His dealings with transgressors* (ver. 19); their punishment corresponds to their sin: having "served strange gods" wilfully, they shall "serve strangers" compulsorily. Yet, 3. *God limits the severity of their punishment* (ver. 18), for His *promises* must be fulfilled to Judah, and His *mercy* must be illustrated before the world as well as His justice; and the *enemy* whom God employs to punish shall see that God gives not the sceptre into his hand. God is the Supreme King; His sceptre rules over mighty nations (ver. 15), and is stretched over even the guiltiest sinners (ver. 18), that their repentance might lead to their redemption.

Ver. 20–25. Solemn Reasons for Fearing the Lord.

First: *Argument from God's government of the sea* (ver. 22, 23). Preliminary remarks: 1. God, the author and governor of the sea, "placed sand for *bound of the sea.*" 2. God binds the sea within limits of law, "by perpetual *decree.*" 3. God's laws are permanent in their control. 4. God is ever present in His laws and contrivances: "Tremble at *My presence* which placed the sand," &c. 5. God's presence in His all-pervading laws should have a restraining and reverencing influence upon men: "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord," &c.

I. God's government of the sea. 1. His government of the sea is suited to *impress man with an idea of infinite power.* 2. To impress man with the idea of *consummate wisdom.* 3. Of *special goodness.* Twofold: (*a.*) negatively, in checking the threatening invasion of the sea; (*b.*) affirmatively, in giving rain, &c. (ver. 24). Its obedience is a *matter of necessity:* waves may "toss themselves," but God absolutely controls. Its voice to man is, "Fear Him, obey His commands, willingly bend to His will, ere He crush thee."

II. Man's revolting tendencies. 1. *God has prescribed the bounds of man's actions* and thoughts by befitting laws. As the sea has "bounds," so there are limits to every finite being. 2. To *overstep these limits is rebellion* against the Great Lawgiver. 3. *Man has revolted* (ver. 23), differing in this from the sea. (Nature protests and remonstrates against human lawlessness.) 4. Man can do what the sea can *not:* (*a.*) man has "a heart," the sea has not; a will-power; (*b.*) this power in man has been prostituted to evil: "*rebellious* heart." Con.: 1. God must govern heart and will by Heart and Will influences. 2. It is easier for God to rule oceans than man, because "he has a rebellious *heart.*" 3. Man, as a rebel, contrasts unfavourably with the material creation, and God notices it with painful emotion: "Fear ye not Me?" &c.—*Homilist.*

Second: *Argument from God's bestowment of the harvest* (ver. 24, 25). The history of Judah in Jeremiah's time shows His dealings with a sinful and impenitent nation, and offers awful warnings of the fate of such as resist His grace, despise His long-suffering, and harden themselves against His loving correction. 1. What befell the Jews may befall any nation whose offences against God are equally great and grievous. 2. The sins which provoked the indignation of Heaven may be learned. (*a.*) Idolatry and worship of false gods (ver. 19). (*b.*) Habitual and impious perjury (ver. 2). (*c.*) Scandalous uncleanness (ver. 7). (*d.*) Covetous and oppressive to the poor (ver. 26). (*e.*) Destitute of a habitual sense of God's presence and power in the ordinary and natural dispensations of His mercy and Providence (ver. 24).

I. Until the Gospel was communicated to the world, *attentive observance of the dispensation of Providence* was the principal means whereby God's Spirit drew the Gentiles to Himself, and led them to piety and obedience. 1. It was the *religion of Nature.* Paul attested this at Lystra (Acts xiv. 15–17), and urged it upon the Romans (Rom. i. 19, 20). 2. *From God's works alone,* His being, power, mercy, may be fully and satisfactorily proved, even without the advantages of revelation: they show *design;* they attest a *Creator,* and an *all-wise Author;* while "visible

things," night and day, witness of the Most High, His *greatness and His goodness*. All His works appeal to us: "Let us now fear the Lord."

II. Although we enjoy the full light of the glorious Gospel, we can never too closely keep in mind the fact that *all things we see and enjoy are ordained by God*. 1. We have less need than the heathen to learn about God from His outward and visible works; yet, 2. We are beholden to His Providence for all essential natural blessings. 3. Nothing in nature could reach maturity but for the fatherly care of God. Thus learning our *total dependence on God*, three consequences will follow: (1.) A perfect resignation to His will and trust in His mercy. He who has not withheld His own Son from our spiritual necessity, will not deny us anything needful to us. (2.) We must not pride ourselves in our worldly goods as if they were our own, nor set our hearts upon them as if sure of keeping them for ever. (3.) As God gives us all things, there is only one way of obtaining in this world whatever is needful and good for us, *i.e.*, constantly make known our wants to Him in prayer.

III. From *the natural events* around us we may learn: 1. Diligence in our spiritual concerns, that the Word of Life may ripen in our hearts. 2. Pray that the Heavenly Sower will not pass us by in barrenness. 3. When observing the tender blade, reflect on the weakness of our advance in piety, and entreat Him who tempers all the elements to "work all things together for our good." 4. When the harvest hour is nigh, let us think how short our time is, and pray that we may not be found blasted or unfruitful.—*Arranged from Sermon by Bishop Reginald Heber.* Dated A.D. 1838.

Ver. 26–31. Spiritual Criminality of most Hideous Form.

Guilt has its climax: sinners see it not as a "wonder and a horror" (ver. 30), because they descend by gradual stages to the utmost depths of defilement, and grow accustomed to the horrible distortion of the life and affections; moreover, as they sink into the loathsome depths, their perception becomes darkened, and sensibilities grow sottish (ver. 21). Else *sinners would be horrified at themselves*. But the spectacle of man distorted and debased is a "wonderful and a horrible thing" to the *good* and to *God*; "*wonderful*," that man can sink to such depths, considering what he was and might become; "*horrible*," that so fair a creature could become so foul, that God's people can be rendered so hideously the children of the devil.

I. The predacious cruelty of the wicked (ver. 26, 27). Devoid of honourable feeling, they will wrong any one so as to advance themselves. 1. *Malicious.* 2. *Cunning* 3. *Treacherous.* They who trust the wicked walk into swamps, follow a ghastly shadow, tread the ways to hell.

II. The gains of guilt and oppression (ver. 27, 28). Men of no conscience or restraints can prosper and aggrandise themselves more easily than the good; nor wonder: earth is their heaven; "in life they have their good things;" the god of this world feeds their sensual souls; but woe follows all. 1. *Society accords place and power* to the successful; "become great." 2. *Wealth is within the reach of the scheming and extortionate;* "waxen rich." 3. *Self-indulgence and luxury* become their rule; "waxen fat, and shine." 4. *They may be pitied who are in their power* (ver. 28); for avarice and oppression have rendered them heartless and selfish, dead to all sense of justice, or compassion for the suffering and injured.

III. The horrifying extremes of sin. To what it will grow. 1. *The social leaders surpass all ordinary bounds of wickedness* (ver. 28); *i.e.*, they cast off all restraint; "fear not God, nor regard men;" use their power and wealth for grossest tyranny and foulest immorality (ver. 8). 2. *The religious leaders beguile the people with impostures;* "prophets and priests" combine to decoy and destroy souls. Awful when spiritual guides plot their people's ruin! 3. *The godless nation luxuriates in delusions.* Enjoy the deceptions; abandon themselves to licentiousness and vileness; cast off Jehovah and make gods of their own gratifications and lusts. Such a scene is only fit for the "blackness of darkness."

IV. The fearful issues of all. 1. There comes an "*end thereof*" (ver. 31). 2. *Sinners would then gladly "do" anything to escape.* 3. *The terrible reckoning will surely come* (ver. 29). *God* Himself will comfort them: "*visit them.*" *Vengeance* will break forth on such transgressors. There will be bitterness and woe at "the end," without amelioration or redemption.

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* A CITY SAVED FOR ONE GOOD MAN.

There were good men at this time in Jerusalem: king Josiah, Baruch the scribe, Zephaniah the prophet; but the righteous were driven into seclusion by the public immorality and hostility, so that in "the streets and broad places" not one could be found. *Note:* There may be holy men praying and weeping in secret, though none in the highways: they may be forced to retreat from places of power and publicity, yet "God knoweth them that are His." The prophet appeals to the people to find one good man *among* and of *themselves.* (Addenda on ver. 1, "*Streets of Jerusalem,*" "*Seek a man.*")

Great truths suggested:—

I. Doom suspended while a Saviour is sought. God arrests the sword while the search is everywhere diligently prosecuted.

1. *The high value of one good life:* in God's esteem; in a nation's experience. Evils are thereby averted from many who neither appreciate nor recognise their benefactor. "Ye are the *salt* of the earth." (Addenda, ver. 1, "*One true man would avert woe.*")

2. *The saving mission of a holy man.* One man of *prayer* may call down mercy on numbers: one *zealous* Christian may snatch hundreds as brands from the burning. The lone missionary among heathen. The earnest preacher of Jesus among a congregation. The diligent worker for Christ in society.

3. *The sublime fulfilment of this in Jesus.* Then there was "One Man" in the city. *We* "can find a Man," for whose sake God "will pardon." But as yet Christ had not come.

II. Doom necessitated because no Saviour could be found. There was not one good man to hold the gap against the foe. What a dreadful state of society; how utterly and hopelessly corrupt. Equally true in God's sight, "whose eyes are upon the truth" (ver. 3), that "there is none righteous, no not one." Nowhere *from among men* could a *sinless saviour* be found.

1. *The Christless sinner's perplexity.* He can discover no Saviour. The agonising devices of *heathenism* show this. The terror of men who have sought hope *apart from the Gospel* attests the same fact. The plaintive lament of the *restless soul*, "Oh, that I knew where I might find *Him!*" confirms the truth. There is "no man," and therefore "no pardon," till Jesus is found.

2. *The perilous state of humanity.* The sword was unsheathed against Jerusalem: wrath is declared against all mankind, "for that all have sinned." The cry appropriate to all is, "Lord, save, *we perish!*". Dire and awful is the nearing doom (ver. 15, 16; comp. Rom. ii. 9; Rev. ix. 14–17).

3. *The effectual resources of God.* Not for Jerusalem, but for humanity, God found a Saviour. She "knew not the day of her visitation" (Isa. lix. 16, 17, 20; Job xxxiii 24). The very depths of human sin, and absence of even one true man among men, forms only the dark background to throw out into greater distinctness and beauty the perfections of Jesus (Ps. xlv. 2; Heb. vii. 26).

Comments: "The wicked world has in the pious and believing a noble treasure and defence."—*Lange.*

"See how ready God is to forgive, how swift to show mercy. So pleasing would it be to God to find any such, that for their sakes He would pardon the city; if there were but ten righteous men in Sodom, if but one of a thousand, of ten thousand in Jerusalem, it should be spared."—*M. Henry.*

Sodom *could not* be destroyed while *one* righteous man was in it (Gen. xix. 13, 16); and Zoar *was spared* by the sole worth of that same one man (ver. 20–22).

Ver. 2. *Theme:* PIOUS SPEECH CLOAKING AN IMPIOUS SOUL.

Comments: "Though they make an outward and fashionable profession of the name of the Lord in *worshipping* Him, in *swearing by Him*, yet it is but in falsehood and hypocrisy."—*Bishop Hall.*

"*As the Lord liveth:*" the common form of oath among the Jews; yet this sacred oath used only to deceive and defraud.—*Wogan.*

"*They swear falsely,*" that is (1.) They are not sincere *in the profession they make to God,* but are false to Him. (2.) Though they appeal to no other God, they *make no conscience of calling Jehovah to witness to a lie.* They do not swear by idols, yet they forswear themselves; which is an affront to the *God of truth,* as swearing by idols would have been an affront to the *only true God.*—*M. Henry.*

Ver. 3. THE VIRTUE FOR WHICH GOD'S EYES SEARCH. "Eyes upon truth:" comp. Ps. li. 6; John iv. 23. Eyes *upon* an object denote (i.) *diligent inspection;* nothing escapes; (ii.) *delicate perception;* the least is not lost to sight, though but as a grain of mustard-seed; (iii.) *desirous expectation;* so anxious to find the grace He loves.

Naegelsbach renders the words: "*Lord, thine eyes look for faith;*" and remarks (*a.*) The Lord seeks it, for He regards it. (*b.*) He sought by manifold chastisements to bring the people to it, but in vain. And asks, Why does God impose *faith as the only condition of salvation?* (i.) Because faith gives the greatest glory to God. (ii.) Because it is at the same time the easiest and most difficult exercise of the human heart. For (*a.*) to believe, *i.e.*, to accept God's grace as a free gift, every one is, and must be, able to do. (*b.*) He who can do it has vanquished himself at the *one* point, and won all.

"God looks to the *faith,* the upright purpose of the heart, and without it the nominal fealty of an oath is an abomination."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 3. *Theme:* GOD'S CHASTISEMENTS DESIGNED FOR MAN'S CONVERSION.

Here is only a complaint of the misimprovement of afflictions, yet the right use is indicated: they *should* have "grieved" for their undutifulness to God, and with relentings for sin they should have "*received* correction;" submitted to the rod as to the chastisement of a Father, without sullen murmuring or fainting; their "faces" should have been flushed with ingenuous shame, and washed with penitential tears: they ought immediately to have "returned to God." Hence ingenuous sorrow, shame, and repentance, a submissive, corrigible temper, and a sincere conversion to God, are the designed ends of the afflictions He sends upon impenitent sinners.

The *Gospel* is preached, *Holy Spirit* communicated, to arouse consciences. When Word disregarded, conscience slighted, Spirit resisted, then our Heavenly Father uses the rod; the one end being that we turn to the Lord. Inquire, *What is it to turn to the Lord?*

I. *Turning to the Lord presupposes* a deep conviction that you have gone astray, both from way of duty and of safety. You will never *leave your present course* till plainly see it leads you down to chambers of death; nor "*turn to the Lord,*" till realise that your interests and duty render it urgent and necessary.

1. If God should open the eyes of the unconverted, what astonishing and unsuspected views would present themselves of your past course and present condition! That all your highest interests have been *neglected.* 2. You would see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. 3. The purity and strictness of God's law, the equity and terror of its penalty. 4. Your obligations to Him as your Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. Oh, that experience may be your teacher of the reality of these things!

II. *Turning to God supposes a full*

conviction of the necessity of immediate response. 1. Because if you die in your present condition you will certainly be lost. 2. Because you have no time for delay. And, 3. It will wound your heart to think this work has not been done long ago. Dying men bear testimony that the present hour is the most fit season for turning to God.

III. *If afflictions should prove the means of turning you to God, they will* rouse you to most earnest persevering endeavours that you may truly *find Him. Pray* without ceasing: "Behold, he prayeth!" Accustom yourselves to solemn *meditation;* hear and read God's Word. Seek the *society of those who know the Lord.* These will *promote* your conversion. Also, you will guard against whatever would *hinder* it; shun wicked courses; moderate your pursuits of the world; avoid evil company. "With fear and trembling" the awakened sinner would begin to "work out his salvation."

IV. *If afflictions should turn you to God, you would be made deeply sensible of your inability,* that the Holy Spirit's grace was essential to your true conversion. 1. Your endeavours avail to avoid hindrances and seek helps. 2. Yet your own heart is against you, and the disease of sin is irrecoverable but by Divine grace. Then the prayer will arise, "Turn me and I shall be turned" (Jer. xxxi. 18).

V. *If ever you turn to the Lord, you will realise that* Christ is the only way of access to God. You will come as criminals upon the footing of *grace,* not merit; will renounce all your righteousness; a broken-hearted rebel. Till such, you have nothing to do with Jesus.

VI. *If you are turned to God, you will* experience a great change in temper and conduct. 1. *Heart* and *mind* will take a new bias; thoughts and affections towards God; aspirations towards heaven; Jesus dear to you; "all things become new." Turned *to* God and holiness; turned *from* sin and its pleasures. Also, 2. *Your practices* will follow the inward impulse and principle of religion.

VII. *If turned to the Lord,* your mind will habitually retain that turn. Your religion not a transient fit, but *permanent* and *persevering.*

Application: Do you in your consciences *hope you have been converted and* turned to God? Does your case answer to this description? But some of you may have *discovered yourselves as unconverted.* Are you willing to turn to God with all your hearts? "Come, and let us return to the Lord, for He hath torn" &c. (Hos. vi. 1).—*Rev. J. Davies, A.M., President of College, New Jersey,* A.D. 1756.

Ver. 4. *Theme:* IGNORANCE MAY EXCUSE IRRELIGION.

I. Their sad disadvantages. 1. "*Poor,*" living in rudeness and neglect, their existence absorbed in struggles to live. 2. "*Foolish,*" ignorant and erring from lack of training and teaching. Their intellectual life wholly neglected.

II. Their spiritual deprivations. 1. "*Know not the way* of the Lord;" untaught as to the *manner of life* He requires, the *true religion* He revealed. 2. "*Nor the judgment of* their God;" that which He had pronounced right: for false prophets confused and misled them, and they followed as those who were "blind." A pitiful case: spiritual dupes.

III. Their excusable deficiencies. God does not reap where He has not sown. To whom little is given, of them He asks little. He judges according to what we have, not what we have not (Numb. xii. 11). 1. God's tender consideration. 2. Discriminating commiseration. (Addenda, ver. 4, "*Ignorance and irreligion.*")

Comments:

i. Prevailing ignorance is the lamentable cause of abounding impiety and iniquity. What can come from them that sit in darkness but "works of darkness"?

ii. This is commonly a reigning sin among poor people. There are the devil's poor, as well as God's, who might "*know the way of the Lord*" without book-learning; but they are "willingly ignorant."—*M. Henry.*

Ver. 5. *Theme:* KNOWLEDGE SHOULD ENSURE PIETY.

It is a dramatic contrast. The prophet assumes to imagine and expect that their advantages would be accompanied with appropriate religious responses: superior socially, superior spiritually. "*The great;*" *i.e.*, the wealthy and educated, removed beyond blinding care for their daily wants; "*they have known,*" possessed the advantages of education and religious knowledge. Yet these, instructed in the law, and who ought to teach their inferiors (Micah iii. 1), have violated every precept and been defiant of God. (i.) *Abuse of advantages.* (ii.) *Proportionate guilt.* (iii.) *Heavier condemnation* (Luke xii. 47).

"*I will speak unto the great men.*" *Zinzendorf* remarks: "A preacher has no more miserable and ignorant hearers than the respectable. While they are spelling their way back to the cross, and are getting so far as to *know how to learn* that we are *saved alone* by the grace of the Lord Jesus; till we get them so far as to understand that the command of the New Testament is *to believe*, and all that morality can lug about for eighty years is gone with the word, 'Son, be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee,' the *ignorant* would have been able to do it thrice. A teacher greatly deceives himself if he seeks among the respectable that comfort in his office which he does not meet with among the common people."—*Quoted in Lange.*

Ver. 4, 5. THE IGNORANCE OF THE POOR AND THE INSOLENCE OF THE GREAT.

I. **The character of many of the poor as here described.** Seeing them impudent in sin, and unreformed by the judgments of God, Jeremiah says, "Surely these are the poor," &c.

1. *Their obstinacy in sin was owing to their ignorance*—(1.) *Of religion;* "the way of the Lord." (2.) *Of God's providences;* "the judgments of our God." Ignorance is *still* the source of error and sin. (*a.*) Men misapprehend *the nature of God;* presume upon His mercy. (*b.*) Form vague and incorrect views of the *salvation of Christ;* ignore that it is a "doctrine according to godliness" (Eph. iv. 18.)

2. *Their ignorance was in great measure occasioned by their poverty.* (*a.*) This deprived them of *education;* uninformed as to principles and religion. (*b.*) All their thoughts and cares are about *their worldly wants.* (*c.*) *They absent themselves from God's house* because of poor attire. (*d.*) *They associate with persons like-circumstanced and like-minded,* who encourage one another in neglect of religion; and, (*e.*) They thereby *lose all self-respect,* sin impudently and "glory in their shame." Yet their ignorance was culpable; they lived in a land of light, had more advantages than the rest of the world. So with the poor in Britain, who yet live in a most stupid and lamentable ignorance as to God, their souls, and eternity.

II. **The character of the great as here described.** Not only men of honourable birth, large fortunes and considerable learning; but those of easy circumstances, educated, having capacity and leisure to learn Divine things.

1. *They had a better knowledge of religion than the poor.* Their minds cultured; kept from learning the manners of the vulgar; attained a general knowledge of the world; had some knowledge of religion—its theory; they could consequently enter into the prophet's reasoning and address.

2. *They acted as bad as the poor, or worse.* Like headstrong, refractory oxen, that struggle and break the yoke. Men should submit to the restraints of reason and conscience, to the authority and law of God. But though light was in their understandings, their wills were perverse and affections misplaced. They would not submit to prophets' reproofs, offered violence to reason and conscience, "broke the bands of the Lord asunder" (Ps. ii. 5).

3. *Their conduct was chiefly owing to their greatness.* (*a.*) Lifted up with pride, they resented admonition. (*b.*) They think religion is only to restrain

the vulgar, not to bind those in rank. (*c.*) They shrink from showing reverence for God and being exact in religious observances. (*d.*) Worldly things have mischievous influence upon their hearts. (*e.*) Flattered by others, they forget or but formally pay homage to the Most High. (*f.*) They mind earthly things, neglecting the culture and interests of the soul.

Christ met chief opposition from the great, learned, and rich men.

Application: 1. *Learn what is the most important and profitable knowledge.* 2. *The advantages of being placed in the middle condition of life* (Prov. xxx. 8). 3. *What an excellent charity it is to furnish the poor with the means of knowledge.* Let "the poor" know that to be wilfully ignorant is an inexcusable crime. And "the great" that they "have no cloak for their sin," if they allow their wealth to fortify themselves against God's truth and calls. "The rich and poor meet together" at death: "the small and great" shall stand before the bar of Christ in judgment.—*Rev. Job Orton*, A.D. 1775, *Abstract.*

Ver. 7. *Theme:* IMPOSSIBILITY OF PARDON.

Can it be? Is it in accordance with God's dealings with man? (Comp. Isa. i. 18; Mic. vii. 18.)

I. *Pardon is possible to chiefest sinners.*

II. *Yet only on the terms of repentance and return to God.*

III. *But, by "forsaking Him," men forsake all possibility of salvation.*

"When I fed them to the full," &c. (See *Literary Criticisms* on verse; also Addenda to chap. v., ver. 7.)

Ver. 9. *Theme:* AN OUTRAGED AND AVENGING GOD. (See *Literary Criticisms* on ver. 7, "*I fed them to the full.*")

God had bound them in oath to allegiance; yet *they violated their spiritual relationship* by abandoning themselves to idols; and, in following the defiling indulgences of idolatrous orgies, they had repudiated God's laws which they covenanted, at Sinai and under Josiah's reformation, to keep (Exod. xxiv. 3, 7; 2 Kings xxiii. 3); and thus *violated the sanctity of social relationship.*

I. *By evil deeds of men God is outraged.*

II. *For evil deeds of men God will be avenged.* "The harlots' houses" are preferentially and metaphorically, if not exclusively, idol temples; but the charge glides from this religious sense, viz., spiritual inconstancy to God, into the physical sense, viz., carnal uncleanness among themselves; for prostitution formed part of idolatrous worship.

Ver. 10. *Theme:* A COMMISSION TO DESTROY.

How alien it is to the Divine heart to destroy is clear from Ezek. xviii. 31, 32; John iii. 16. And Zion was God's beloved city, dear to His eye (Ps. xlviii.). Yet, though slow to anger, averse from destroying, and tender towards Jerusalem, *the edict goes forth.* God summons the foe to waste and destroy the Holy City, and those who dwelt therein.

I. The scene depicted. A vineyard enclosed by walls (see *Lit. Crit.* on verse); the enemy scales them; his swords ruthlessly cut off branches, shoots, down to the very root-stem, but there his destructive work ends. Its *meaning:* Judah, a noble vine (ii. 21), but its outgrowth had deteriorated, yielding now only sour and poisonous grapes (Deut. xxxiv. 32, 33). All these sinful descendants of the *stock of David* should *perish*, but the race must not become extinct.

II. The destruction commanded. Judea is God's vineyard (Isa. v. 1–7); none could enter except He permitted. But He calls the invader, and commissions him to use his weapon freely. What a lamentable case for that people! Not only had God withdrawn His care—a *negative* calamity, but He summoned the enemy to destroy—a *positive* calamity.

III. The reservation enjoined. The wilful destroyer was not free: limits were imposed. Our enemies are not omnipotent. God's will rules the issues of war: His mercy limits the ravages of justice. The Jews must not be exter-

minated; for the promise must stand (Lev. xxvi. 44).

IV. The explanation furnished. This overthrow, this abandonment of God's people to an imperious, impious foe, is startling,—requires explanation: given, "They are not the Lord's." Yet they were outgrowths of the stock of David. 1. Ancestral privileges may be forfeited. 2. Descendants do not always retain the same piety which distinguished their forefathers. 3. Consequently the covenant of promise is annihilated. Every man stands out singly responsible to God; he cannot escape the punishment of his own sin by any ancestral relationships. The children of best of parents may come to ruin.

Ver. 11. (See chap. iii. 20.) Though Judah and Israel were at variance with each other, they agreed in wronging the Lord, who had given them all the national blessings, victories and honours they ever knew. Israel had reaped the bitter fruits: O that Judah would be forewarned! Otherwise, they would be united in misery. Alike faithless, a like fate.

Ver. 12, 13. *Theme:* ALIENATION, THE ROAD TO ATHEISM. "They have belied the Lord," *i.e.*, denied Him. Either: 1. *Denied that God was such as Jeremiah described,*—a punisher of evildoers; or, 2. *Denied that the coming disasters were in any sense God's doing,*—He has nothing to do with it, they come apart from Him; or, 3. *Denied the existence of Jehovah as God,* as their God, —repudiated Him, wanted to hear nothing of or from Him.

I. Moral degeneracy produces mental obscurity. Sin deadens the sensibility, excludes God from thought, until practical indifference and defiance of Him rule the life. Easy and natural, when we dislike God, to ignore Him and revolt from His claims.

II. Mental obscurity issues in spiritual darkness. Conscience seared, past feeling, desiring not the knowledge of God's ways, till "the fool says in his heart, There is no God." And "the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not."

Theme: OBSTINATE UNBELIEF. i. *Its nature.* It denies God, and therefore despises (*a.*) God's Word, (*b.*) God's messengers. ii. *Its punishment.* The tables are turned. (*a.*) The unbeliever, before fire, now becomes wood. (*b.*) The Word of God, before regarded as wood, becomes fire.—*Naeg.*

"*The Word is not in them,*" rather *speaker* is not, &c. It is not a noun, but a verb with the article instead of the possessive pronoun; so that literally it means, *And he who speaketh is not in them, i.e.*, there is no one who speaketh in them,—what the prophets say has no higher authority than themselves.—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 14. *Theme:* GOD'S METHOD OF CONFUTING UNBELIEF. (Addenda, ver. 14, "*My words shall devour them.*")

i. *Withering the intellectual vanity in the unbeliever:* giving to His Word a fiery penetrating power, consuming his pride, confidence, and hopes. It may be as a "fire in his bones," destroying all peace, ravaging his conscience and heart with burning terrors.

ii. *Fulfilling His Word upon the unbeliever:* he finds out its truth by experiencing the doom it threatened: the fire of Divine anger descends upon him.

Note: Unbelief must and will be consumed with fire. Happy he in whom it is consumed in this life by God's Word; but, failing this, it will be consumed in the life to come by God's wrath. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all them that forget God."

Ver. 15–17. *Theme:* WRATHFUL AGENTS OF DESTRUCTION.

God can summon them: *historically* He has done so; *prophetically* He will. This "day of salvation" *intervenes.* "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet 2 Thess. i. 7–10. In the past He used the armies of earth; in the future He will use the "armies of heaven." "*Mighty*" were the Chaldeans (ver. 15): He will come with "*mighty* angels" (comp. Rev. x. 1, xviii. 21: Ps. ciii. 20); *agents*

of Divine wrath (Rev. xvi. 1; 2 Thess. i. 8; 2 Kings xx. 35).

I. Unmeasured resources of Divine justice. Jews knew nothing of Chaldeans (ver. 15); we cannot penetrate the unknown realms, or measure the might and terrors of God's ministers (Matt xxvi. 53).

II. Pitiable insecurity of transgressors. They make "defences," and *trust* in them (ver. 17); but what can shut away affliction, death, the judgment?

III. Merciful interval of propitiation. Why forewarned? That we may "flee from the wrath to come" (Heb. vi. 18).

Ver. 18. *Theme:* A LIMIT TO JUST JUDGMENTS. Light gleams beyond the dreadful vision. Would that a word as definite could anywhere be found to encourage hope after the great judgment of the world! How contrasted with this *promise* for Judah are the deliberate, multiform, and emphasized *threatenings* of the New Testament as to the eternal fate of the rebel soul!

Ver. 19. *Theme:* GOD'S EXPLANATION OF MAN'S SPIRITUAL MISERIES. The bewildering inquiry is ever rising, Why is humanity spiritually enslaved and banished? Why under alien tyranny? Why outlawed from the promised land? God answers all: Man makes his own misery; seeks his own enslavement; forfeits his rightful inheritance. And this, not because God has made man subject to sin, but despite God's remedies for man's redemption from sin. He forges his own chains, and procures his own banishment.

I. Wilful self-destruction.

1. *Desertion of our only Saviour.* For God was Judah's Saviour (Isa. xlv. 21). Even as revealed *in Jesus* and on Calvary, men "despise the Lord that bought them."

2. *Deliberate enslavement to alien gods.* Admitted "strange gods" to Jehovah's territory; then "served them." This is voluntary slavery (Rom. vi. 16; 2 Pet. ii. 19). "Thou has destroyed thyself."

II. Retribution in kind. "Answer them, *Like as*," &c. The penalty corresponds to the sin. 1. *Forsaken.* They having "forsaken" God, would be "forsaken" by God; left to the enemy and to exile. 2. *Serve strangers.* They had preferred strangers, *foreign gods*, and voluntarily bowed to them; they should perforce serve strangers, *foreign rulers*, and know the bitterness of alien tyranny. 3. *In a land not theirs.* They had introduced these strange *gods* into a land which was not *theirs*, but Jehovah's; they should be carried into a land not theirs, slaves into *captivity*.

Serve the *spiritual usurper*, rejecting Christ, you shall be "led *captive* at his will" into grievous *exile*, "a land not yours," but "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Deut. xxviii. 47, 48).

Ver. 21. *Theme:* INDIFFERENCE. An evil ruinous to the soul: indifference to true and saving religion. How it prevails! Text exhibits it.

I. What God has done to produce pious consideration.

1. *He has given powers of mind adapted to it.* "Eyes," to see, discern, read, &c. "Ears," to hearken, messengers of truth. "Understanding," to know, weigh, reflect, &c.

2. *He has given us the means to answer to these powers.* His Word; His servants; His providence, &c. So men are excuseless.

3. *His Holy Spirit to strive, convince*, &c.

II. The indifference men often exhibit.

1. *The indifference of some is total, without any concern.* Like stocks and stones.

2. *Others are considerate only of the externals of religion.* They hear and see and attend, &c., to the outward, and that only.

3. *The consideration of some is only to the intellectual parts of the truth.* A mental study; philosophical attention such as they give to literature.

4. *The consideration of others is occasional.* Under very arousing discourses, providences, sickness, bereavements, &c.

III. The consequences of this indifference.

1. *It is extreemly "foolish."* Moral insanity: opposite of wisdom and prudence.

2. *Detrimental to the soul.* Makes it "blind," "deaf;" robbing it of spiritual food and enjoyment; degrading it.

3. *Specially offensive to God.* Infatuated rebellion; ingratitude.

4. *Must end in the soul's ruin.* Now is the period of soul's probation. No moral fitness without devout consideration.

Application. 1. Examine and test yourselves. 2. Seek the quickening influences of the Divine Spirit. 3. Be resolved and wise now, lest perish.—*Rev. Jabez Burns, D.D.*

Ver. 20–24. *Theme:* PERSUASIVES TO THE FEAR OF GOD. The prophet having reproved their sin and threatened God's judgments, is sent on another errand which he must "publish in Judah,"—to persuade them to fear God. This would be an effectual principle in their reformation, as its absence explained their apostasy.

I. He complains of the shameful stupidity of this people. 1. *Their understandings were darkened.* They possessed intellectual faculties and capacities, but did not employ and improve them (ver. 21). *Note:* We cannot judge men by the advantages and opportunities they enjoy: sit in darkness in land of light; live in sin in holy land; bad in best of places. 2. *Their wills were stubborn;* not submit to rules of Divine law (ver. 23). *Observe:* The revolting heart is a rebellious one: those who withdraw from their allegiance to God do not stop there, but, by siding with Satan, take up arms against Him.

II. He ascribes this to the want of the fear of God. 1. *Their being without understanding* (ver. 21) he accounts for by this absence of fear (ver. 22). If you keep up awe of God, you would be more observant of what He says. 2. *Their rebellion and revolt* (ver. 23) he explains likewise (ver 24). They did not encourage the "fear of the Lord," hence apostasy. Because we neglect to stir up our hearts to holy awe of God, we are so apt to rebel.

III. He suggests some things proper to possess us with a holy fear of God.

1. *We must fear the Lord and His greatness* (ver. 22). Shall we not "tremble at His presence," be afraid of affronting or trifling with Him who, in nature and providence, gives such incontestable proofs of almighty power and sovereign dominion? He keeps and manages the sea! (1.) By this we see His *universal sovereignty;* therefore to be had in reverence. (2.) This shows *how easily He could drown the world* again, by withdrawing His "*decree;*" therefore we lie continually at His mercy, and should fear to make Him our enemy. (3.) Even the *unruly waves obey Him,*—neither revolt nor rebel; why then should our hearts? (ver. 23).

2. *We must fear the Lord and His goodness* (Hos. iii. 5). We must "fear the Lord our God" (ver. 24), *i.e.*, worship Him, give Him glory, and keep ourselves in His love. (1.) Because *He is always doing us good.* (2.) Because *these blessings are consequent upon His promise* (Gen. viii. 22). 3. Because *we have such a necessary dependence upon Him.* The fruitful seasons rendered the *heathen* inexcusable in their contempt of Him (Acts xiv. 17), yet the Jews were not wrought upon to fear Him, though it appears how much it is our interest to do so.—*M. Henry.* (Addenda, ver. 22, "*Sand for bound of the sea.*")

On *the fear of God.* i. **Motives from without.** 1. God's displays of power (ver. 22, 24). 2. God's displays of grace. ii. **Inner conditions.** 1. That we *open* our eyes and ears (ver. 21.) 2. That we allow ourselves to be impelled by what we see and hear (ver. 23).—*Naeg. in Lange.* (Addenda, ver. 23, "*Revolting heart.*")

"Neither does God's power move the obdurate people to the fear of Him, nor do the proofs of His love make any impression."—*Keil.*

"This is a glorious discovery of the omnipotence and majesty of God. But that men are so secure, and think not of Him who allows them to live so securely, this is indeed an insane business."—*Vitzendory, quoted in Lange.*

"They *had* the power of perception, and were *responsible* for the exercise of it."—*Henderson.*

"The sea, the mightiest of God's works, cannot prevail, cannot break His laws, because God has not endowed it with free-will. Man, physically impotent, can prevail, because, being made in God's image, he is free."—*Speaker's Com.*

"The appeal to God's care for man (ver. 24), offers proof which addresses itself chiefly to the thoughtful; hence he says, 'in their heart.' By the intelligent study of God's dealings, men perceive that they are not merely acts of power, but also of love."—*Ibid.* (Addenda, ver. 22, "*Tremble at my presence, which made the sea.*")

Ver. 22–24. *Theme:* ADORATION OF GOD IN NATURE.

This the end of all the privileges with which Israel had been crowned from one generation to another! they had a *revolting and rebellious heart.* And as was the heart, so the life,—*revolted and gone* from their God and Father. There was to them no Lord of heaven and earth to fear for His power or love for His goodness.

i. *The more blessings they enjoyed, the more thankful they should have been.* Yet it seems that the more gracious our Heavenly Father, the more thoughtless are His children; the more boundless His love, the more resolute man's ingratitude.

ii. *Having rejected God* spiritually, *He yet continued to manifest Himself to them in* nature. They absolutely refused Him as the object of soul-homage and love; would have *no God* but idols, *no king* but their own wild will. Either He must altogether hide Himself, or reveal Himself no longer in grace, but in nature.

iii. *Gratitude to God for the fruits of the seasons is a common ground* on which to argue effectually even with the darkest heathen. Thus Paul at Lystra (Acts xiv. 15–17). No one except those who "say in their hearts there is no God," doubt God's gifts in nature's bounties.

iv. *The heathen are denied excuse for their ignorance and idolatry,* because of the marks of God's love and power in the world around them (Rom. i. 20, 21).

v. *Yet the heathen, in outward forms at least, surpassed Jews and Christians.* Though they "felt after God" rather than reached Him, the great multitude of the heathen never denied God in His gifts. They made offerings and sacrifices in acknowledgment of harvest, and sang thanksgivings to their gods. It wanted but a little more knowledge for them to join in David's song (Ps. lxv. 9–13).

vi. *There was, then, great sin on the part of Israel* when, even as natural men, they ignored the mercies of God's ordinary providence, and were not softened and converted by His unmerited goodness (ver. 24).

vii. *A bounteous season ought to awaken love and thankfulness to God.* Yet this is not the feeling of all who bear the name of Christ. Peculiar to Christians to be *ashamed of confessing God* as the Orderer and Giver of all things. Where heathen and Mahometans would have a manly pleasure, as a matter of course, in acknowledging the heavenly Giver, Christians falter.

viii. *God is exceedingly jealous of the honour due unto His name.* He plagued guilty and thankless nations. He may do the same to us (Deut. xi. 13–17, viii. 10–18). Bethink that this God might call a man away in the midst of his thanklessness and unbelief! What measureless woe filled the heart of the Son of God as He thought of the curse upon sin and sinners,—self-condemned, by the hardness of their hearts, to the dwelling-place of the thankless and wicked!

ix. The eye is blind to God in natural wonders, and the ear deaf amid His works, *because the heart has not embraced Him in the Gospel of His Son.* We refuse to bless the Creator because we have no portion in the Redeemer. Come to Him before you are removed from the world of nature and of grace.—*Arranged from "Sermons by Rev. J. Garbett.* (Addenda, ver. 24, "*God, that giveth rain.*")

Ver. 26. *Theme:* WICKED PROFESSORS THE BANE OF THE CHURCH.

Men as atrociously wicked might be found among the people of Jehovah as among the worst of the Gentiles. They were guilty of overreaching and defrauding one another, and thus their houses were replenished with the gains of deceit. Thus in every age: thus now.

The *Church in glory* is pure, undefiled; not so on earth. No society of Christians is endued with the spirit of infallibility; hence tares grow with wheat.

I. God has a people on earth. "My people" (comp. Isa. lxiii. 7–9; Rom. ix. 23–26). 1. *His creation* (Isa. xliii. 21). 2. *Called by Him*, "from darkness to light." 3. *Privileged people;* pardoned, regenerated, adopted. (Comp. also Rom. ii. 28, 29; Phil. iii. 3; 1 Pet. ii. 9).

II. In the Church there is an unhappy admixture of "wicked men." This truth illustrated in Lord's parables —of ten virgins, tares and wheat, net cast into sea.

God's people are not sinless, yet not *allowedly* "wicked" (Job x. 7, 15). A real Christian is anxious to be right (Ps. cxxxix. 23). Yet among them "wicked men" are found. This applies—

1. To those *religious establishments* whose constitution and discipline *offer no restraints to the admission of such characters.* The gate is not strait, but wide. Baptismal regeneration of infants necessitates a lax admission to *communion*, &c.

2. The description is applicable *to mere hearers of the Gospel.* They are among God's people (Ezek. xxxiii. 31). Gospel preached to them in vain; Holy Ghost resisted; neglect great salvation. Is not this wicked?

3. Applicable to those who have *entered the Church without real conversion.* "Walk according to the course of this world, and are by nature children of wrath." Such in our religious assemblages. None in heaven.

(1.) Some professors are *secretly wicked* (Tit. i. 16; 1 Tim. v. 6). As Achan in camp of Israel, Judas among the twelve, Ananias at Jerusalem, Simon Magus in Samaria, Jezebel at Thyatira: such in all churches of saints.

(2.) *Some professors are deceivers;* hypocrites impose on others, and also on themselves. Say "The temple of the Lord are we," but are of the synagogue of Satan (John viii. 54; Rev. ii. 2, 9).

4. Applicable to those *wilfully inactive in the Church.* They belie their profession. Where is their zeal? &c.

5. Applicable to those who *interrupt the peace and harmony of the Church.*

Some have entered through the gate of *human excitement*, of *creature passion*, of *filthy lucre*, of *ambition.*

III. This mixture of the wicked with the godly is a fact. "Are *found*," &c. By whom are they discovered?

1. Frequently *by themselves* (1 John ii. 19).

2. *Persecution* has, and so has *temptation.*

3. By *Christians*, to whom their unholy course, &c., is a grief.

4. They are found *by God* (Rev. iii. 18, 23). Odious to Him.

5. Some will not be found *till the day of judgment* (Matt. iii. 12, xiii. 28–30)

IV. The injurious influence of the conduct of such professors.

1. They bring reproach upon *religion* (Rom. ii. 24).

2. The *hearts of the godly* are grieved and their hands weakened (Josh. vii. 12, 25; 1 John ii. 7; Phil. iii. 18).

3. The *Church is in danger* of being injured by them (Hos. v. 3). A little leaven will leaven the lump (1 Cor. v. 6–8; Gal. v. 9, 10).

4. It frequently *prevents accessions to the Church.*

5. The *guilt of such persons is highly aggravated*, and their *punishment will be awful.* "Many stripes" (Isa. v. 5; Hos. x 1; Matt. xi. 21).

Application: 1. *Self-examination.* "Lord, is it I?" 2. That *may be a true Church though disorderly persons are found in it.* 3. How little is a *mere profession of religion to be trusted in* or boasted of. The goat, though folded among the sheep, is a goat still, and must finally be separated from the flock (Matt. xxv. 32, 33).—*Helps for the Pulpit.*

Ver. 26–29. *Theme:* DECEITS OF THE WICKED.

God retains His claim: "My people." Sees the snares (ver. 26) and miseries (ver. 28) they endure. Estimates the evil influences to which they are exposed (ver. 26), and the calamities wrought by the wicked (ver. 27).

I. Wickedness forces itself into every society. The Church, the home.

1. By hypocritical pretensions. 2. For predacious ends. The "wicked" are *active, deceptive, plotting.*

II. Wickedness is intent on human ruin (John viii. 41, 44).

1. Angry at goodness. 2. Reckless in mischief. 3. Envious of happiness. 4. Greedy of gain. Alas! "*men*" are the spoiler's prey.

III. Wickedness can boast appalling success (ver. 27).

1. Evil devices prosper. 2. Evil-doers aggrandise themselves. Fill their "*houses*" with the gains of ungodliness: alas! fill the abode of doom with decoyed and destroyed souls.

IV. Wickedness thrives by utter heartlessness (ver. 28; Isa. xxxii. 17). Even "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." 1. The man who will wrong God will not scruple to wrong his fellows. 2. Mournful when the wicked are in great power. 3. How contrasted the treatment of the poor and oppressed by Christ (Ps. lxxii. 12–14). 4. What need to pray and work that "the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end."

V. Wickedness ensures God's sure revenge (ver. 29). God will: 1. Avenge His insulted honour. 2. His outraged laws. 3. The suffering victims. 4. The spoliation of His heritage. Oh, the doom of him on whom lies the blood of murdered souls! (Addenda, ver. 26, "*They set a trap;*" ver. 27, "*Retribution in kind.*")

Ver. 30, 31. A CRY OF WARNING IN A PERIOD OF UNIVERSAL APOSTASY.

i. The condition of the people is shocking and abominable: for (*a.*) The leaders of the people mislead them. (*b.*) The people wish to be misled. ii. The consequences correspond to the guilt (comp ver. 25, 14, 16).—*Naeg.*

"*My people love to have it so.*" It is a criterion of false teaching that it lightens the yoke of God's law, removes His fear from the conscience, and leaves man to his own nature; and with this man is only too ready to be content.—*Speaker's Com.*

"The credulous confidence of the ignorant has in all ages been at the command of an interested priesthood."—*Hend.*

"It appears clear from various parts of the Old Testament, that a great number of persons pretending to prophecy arose among the Hebrews, by whom the exertions of the true prophets were greatly counteracted, and the ruin of the nation accelerated."—*Ibid.*

"Like sought, like found. The people wish to have false preachers, and get them, and a blind man leads the blind, until both fall into the ditch (Luke vi. 39)."—*Cramer.*

The fatal consequences. Consider:

i. *What reckoning would be for their wickedness* (ver. 29). Sometimes mercy rejoices against judgment; *How shall I give thee up?* Here judgment is reasoning against mercy; *Shall I not visit?* It denotes:

1. *The certainty and necessity* of God's judgments. Vengeance must come.

2. *The justice and equity* of God's judgments. He appeals to the sinner's own conscience. Do not such guilty abominations merit punishment.

ii. *What was the direct tendency of their wickedness* (ver. 31), *i.e.*—

1. What a *pitch of wickedness* you will come to at last! "What will you do?" What will this grow to? Worse and worse.

2. What a *pit of destruction* you will come to at last! Nothing can be expected but a deluge of wrath from God.

Note: Those who walk in bad ways would do well to consider the tendency of them both to greater sin and utter ruin.—*M. Henry.*

Theme: THE DISMAL OUTLOOK. Text: "What will you do in the end

thereof?" A troublesome question, ghastly in its subtle suggestiveness. Lifts veil of imagination on dark outlook. Vague horrors. There is *something beyond* the immediate present. That beyond is solemn and dreadful enough to dwarf the consideration of the present. Man has a future. Life goes on to stupendous issues. All things verge to a crisis. "What will you do in the end thereof?"

I. That wicked courses come to an "end." The book of human history will close. Angel swear, "Time shall be no more?" The Archangel's trump will sound. Every life must be reckoned.

1. The interval may be delusively pleasant.

2. Men may dream away life in heedlessness.

3. The inevitable close comes on. Death. Judgment.

II. The in "the end" wicked courses are calamitous. Boat in the current over the rapids. Spendthrift comes to penury. Prodigality leads to squandered health and "husks."

1. The terror of a defenceless soul. "What do?"

2. The urgency of preparation. "Do" something *now*.

3. The value of a good hope. Need to do nothing but hide in Christ. How blessed to feel sure (2 Tim. i. 12).

III. That in the calamitous "end" the wicked will have no refuge or plea. "What will you do?" Having "neglected great salvation;" alienated infinite love; despised and offended Jesus; lost your sole interval of escape?

1. Utter dismay (Isa. ii. 19; Rev. vi. 16).

2. Utterly defenceless. Deserted by all human comforters; every false hope gone; and the sinner's Friend your avenging Judge. Not a plea left you to excuse or extenuate your guilt.

IV. That without a refuge or plea "the end" of all is irremediable ruin (ver. 29). (Addenda, ver. 31, "*What do in the end?*")

1. Use the auspicious present. 2. Forsake evil and live. 3. Flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel.

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER V.

Topic: HARVEST SERMON. *Text:* "*Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord: He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of harvest*" (ver. 24).

Three lamentable habits and attitudes of thought:

1. Readiness to see the worst side of God's natural providences. "He giveth rain;" untimely, insufficient, or excessive.

2. Bowing the God of nature out of all active management of His own world. A delusion to suppose weather, rains, and fine "weeks of harvest" are regulated by special providence. God is above such affairs: so say not, "Let us fear, Lord," &c.

3. Ignoring the fact that human conduct affects God's providential dispensations (ver. 25). There is a continual administration of judgment going on in this life, admonitory of the final.

I. The benignant order of natural providences. "Early rain," and "latter;" but rain "reserved" during "weeks of harvest." Without "early," seed not germinate; if "latter" not come, grain dried and withered prematurely; then ripening suns.

1. *Each aspect of nature is welcomed in its season.* God rolls the seasons round, and every change is beneficent and congenial. So in the ages of man: childhood lovely, youth winning, mature have grace, snowy age majestic. But these are only welcomed in their season. "Snow in harvest" not welcomed; ruinous. So childishness in manhood, &c. "In season."

2. *The certain revolution of the seasons.* Every year appointed times come round. Cannot alter; cannot hasten spring, nor delay winter. So seasons of life. (1.) *Seasons cannot be hurried.* Youth must bear its yoke, manhood its toils;

reaping and rest cannot be forestalled. "Race not to swift," &c. (2.) *Seasons cannot be delayed.* Winter refuses to pause. Youth not long with the young: age comes on; or, what is oftener than age, death.

Let not seasons pass unused, lest "weeks of harvest" bring no ingathering.

II. **An interval reserved for harvest ingathering.** God kept these "weeks" from intrusion of unseasonable weather, and "rain."

1. *The reaping season has a fixed duration:* "weeks." Soon gone. Squander golden opportunity: "past!" "What hands do, with might." All gracious seasons are brief. Therefore reapers ply with industry. Men, wise in worldly concerns, take heed that fine opportunities not squandered. Right; God sends favourable times, when, if equal to occasion, reap large gains. Make most of every good occasion in life. Special opportunities of *grace:* "Work while day." Gather in while you may, fruits of Spirit, bounties of Divine love, blessings of redemption.

2. *The work of harvest ingathering.* Fields laden, swept with scythe, crops garnered. Some will complain, dissatisfied with results: so ever. Fear many will be surprised at results of life, when "reap what sown." None expect a bad end or adverse judgment before God. Strange infatuation! Madness to "sow to flesh" and expect other than "corruption." *Bitter* the ingathering of lost hopes and ruined joys! But *glad* the ingathering of the Christian; joyous the harvest.

3. *The Divine law of multiplying.* From handfuls come "harvest." "Thirty, sixty, a hundred." "Heap up treasures." Sow wind, reap whirlwind. Live benignly and devoutly, "receive into everlasting habitations." Same in quality, but increased in quantity. Think on this immeasurable and eternal reaping of the issues of life! Ingathering will come, for God hath "reserved weeks."

III. **Man's becoming response to God's gracious bestowments.** "Let us now fear the Lord."

1. *With discerning adoration, let us receive God's favours.* "Bless the Lord, and forget not benefits." "What render unto the Lord?"

2. *With diligent promptitude let us use the auspicious seasons God sends.* Turn "weeks" to account; waste them not for "more convenient season." Wise husbandman works eagerly to "fill his barns." Make your hearts garners of spiritual peace and joy.

3. *With devoutest service let us show our "fear of the Lord."* The harvest-song God loves, but the harvest-fruits He requires. Lay on His altar life and love. "I beseech you by mercies of Lord, present your bodies living sacrifice," &c.—(Addenda, ver. 24, "*God recognised in the harvest.*")

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER V. ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. "*Streets of Jerusalem.*" In ancient times the streets of Jerusalem seemed to have names. (They have none now.) Several are mentioned: "East Street" (2 Chron. xxix. 4), "Street of the house of God" (Ezra x. 9), "Water-gate Street" (Neh. viii. 1, 3), "Ephraim-Gate Street" (Neh. viii. 16), "Bakers' Street" (Jer. xxxvii. 21).

The number of the "streets" was great (Jer. xi. 13). Jeremiah makes frequent allusion to the "streets of Jerusalem" (Jer. v. 1; vii. 17, 34; ix. 21; xi. 6, 13; xiv. 16; xxxiii. 10; xliv. 6, 9, 21). He was distinctively the prophet of the thoroughfares; and this because the "broad places and streets" were scenes of idolatry, altars and idols being erected therein.

"*Seek, if ye can find a man.*" Diogenes, the cynic, having lighted a lamp, ranged the streets peering about as if searching for something. Being asked what he looked for, he answered, "A man;" or, as is usually recorded, "An honest man!" But the words in Laertius are ἄνθρωπον ζητῶ, "I seek a man." He sought not alone a man with honesty and truth in his character, but a MAN in whom all right and noble qualities were

combined. He constantly reviled the society of Greece with its lack of manhood.

"The host of Nola being bid to summon the good men of the town to appear before the Roman censor, gat him to the churchyard, and there called at the graves of the dead; for he knew not where to call for a good man alive."—*Trapp.*

One true man would avert the coming woe. "Ghislerus reminds us of a story which Pliny relates of King Demetrius, who retired from the city of Rhodium because he could not take it on its only accessible side without destroying some celebrated paintings of Protogenes."—*Lange.* This one man's merits saved the city.

"When the good man mends his armour,
And trims his helmet's plume,
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily
Goes flashing through the loom,
With weeping and with laughter
Still is the story told
How well Horatius kept the bridge.
In the brave days of old."
—*Lays of Ancient Rome.*

Ver. 4. *Ignorance and irreligion.* Ignorance of the price of pearls makes the idiot slight them. Ignorance of the worth of diamonds makes the fool choose a pebble before them. Ignorance of the satisfaction learning affords makes the peasant despise it. So with religion.—*Anthony Horneck.*

Ver. 7. "*When I fed them to the full,*" &c. Fulness in good men often breeds forgetfulness, and in bad men filthiness. *Gula vestibulum luxuriæ*—gluttony is the gallery that incontinency walketh through. The Israelites ate and drank, and rose up to play, *scil.*, with their Midianitish mistresses. Fulness of bread made way to Sodom's sin. Lunatics, when the moon is declining and in the wane, are sober enough; but when full, more wild and exorbitant.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 14. "*My words shall devour them.*" "Though men were hard as rocks, the Word is a hammer which can break them; though as sharp as briers and thorns, the Word is a fire which can devour and torment them."—*Bishop Reynolds.*

An infidel said, "There is one thing that mars all the pleasure of my life." "Indeed!" replied his friend; "what is that?" He answered, "*I am afraid the Bible is true.* If I could know for certain that death is an eternal sleep, my joy would be complete. But here is the thorn that stings me, the sword that pierces to my very soul: *if the Bible is true,* I am lost for ever."

Ver. 22. "*Tremble at my presence, which have made the sea?*"

"Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,
Calm or convulsed,—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark heaving, boundless, eternal, and sublime—
The image of eternity, the throne
Of the Invisible." —BYRON.

"In contemplation of created things
By steps we may ascend to God."—MILTON.

"*Sand for the bound of the sea.*" Modern science has shown that the resisting power of sand is enormous. By the mechanical laws which govern it, the shock of a blow is distributed laterally, and produces little effect. An egg buried a few inches deep in the sand would not be broken by heavy blows falling upon the surface. And so a wave which would shatter rocks falls powerless upon sand.—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

Ver. 23. "*Revolting* heart." The forcible and true meaning of the word "revolt" has become obscured. It suggests affections which had been *drawn back* from God through dislike of His claims; then followed *active resistance,*" rebellion."

Ver. 24. *God recognised in the harvest.* Dr. Guthrie tells us, that as a traveller in a lonely district drew near to a cottage, he heard a man exclaiming, "Thanks be to God for this and Christ!" So earnest was the tone of the speaker, that the traveller ventured to go in to see what the gift was that called forth such thanksgiving. It was but a crust of bread, on which the poor occupant of that cottage was about to make his midday meal. To the devout old man a crust and Christ was something to thank God for. How much more it behoves us, when the valleys are covered with

corn, and when the fruits of the earth are safely stored in the garner, to lift up our hands and our hearts unto God, and say, "Thanks be unto God for all this and Christ!"—*Rev. R. A Bertram.*

"*God, that giveth rain.*" The vast reservoir of the ocean provided for the supply of vapour; the laws which cause these vapours to rise and float in the air; the winds which waft them to the land; the attraction there exercised upon them by trees, mountains, &c.; the currents of air moving in different directions, which, by their differences of temperature cause the vapour to condense and be deposited in drops; the laws of congelation, which store up part of the winter excess in the shape of snow and ice upon the mountains for summer use; the diversified strata of the earth, which store up another portion, causing it in some places to break forth in springs, in others keeping it out of the reach of evaporation, but available for man's use by the digging of wells: all these complicated arrangements show such a thoughtful care for the supply of one of the first necessaries of human life, that those capable of understanding them ought to say in their hearts, "Let us fear the Lord."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 26. "*They set a trap; they catch men.*"

"Proud Nimrod first the bloody chase began,
A mighty hunter—and his prey was man."
—POPE.

Plans adopted for catching *birds.* 1. *Trap;* the usual method (Job xviii. 9; Eccles. ix. 12; Prov. vii. 23); made of two parts—a net stretched over a frame, a stick supporting it, so placed as to give way with the least touch (Amos iii. 5, "gin;" Ps. lxix. 22, "trap"). 2. *Snare;* was a cord (Job xviii. 10, cf. Ps. xviii. 5, cxvi. 3, cxl. 5) so placed as to catch a bird by the leg. 3. *Decoy;* (Jer. v. 26, 27), a cage filled with birds, the door being kept open by stick (or cord), which suddenly closed on the entrance of any bird.

Hunting, with its snares, may remind us of that mighty hunter, Satan, and his devices. Decoys, snares for the unwary. Hence the duty of watchfulness. "In vain the net is spread in the *sight* of any bird" (Prov. i. 17).—*J. Comper Grey, "Topics."*

Ver. 27. "*Retribution in kind.*" "They that will be rich fall into a *snare*" (1 Tim. vi. 9). "Thou fool! this night thy soul is required of thee; then *whose shall those things* be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is *not rich* towards God" (Luke xii. 20, 21).

Ver. 31. "*What do in the end?*" On that day, if all your unforgiven sins are against you; if Jesus Christ, wounded and driven back, is against you; if the Holy Ghost is against you, with whom you have striven; if the offended Lord God Almighty is against you; ah! coming as you are, into that day, you must perish. It will be too late to pray then. Even the granite rocks will fall the other way as you pray to them, "Fall on us," &c.—*Talmage.*

CHAPTER VI.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronological and Historical position of this chapter the same. (Comp. notes on iii., iv., v.)

2. Geographical References.—Ver. 1. "*Tekoa;*" a small town of defence in Judah (2 Chron. xi. 6), six Roman miles from Bethlehem (Jerome), lies on the range of hills which stretch from near Hebron eastward; about eleven miles due south of Jerusalem. Its ruins scarcely cover five acres: they consist of walls of houses, broken columns, cisterns, &c. Birthplace of Amos (vii. 14). Tekoites helped in rebuilding walls of Jerusalem after Captivity (Neh. iii. 5, 27). Town now called *Tekua.* "*Beth-haccarem:*" means vineyard house; situate halfway between Tekoa and Jerusalem, on a mountain, probably "Herodium," the site of Herod's castle; known now as Frank Mountain. Town had a ruler in Nehemiah's time (Neh. iii. 14). This verse indicates that it was used as a beacon station. *Jerome,* who wrote at Bethlehem, says, "Every one knows that Jerusalem is situated in the tribe of Beniamin As for Tekoa, we

see every day with our own eyes that it is a little town upon a hill about twelve [Roman] miles from Jerusalem. Between these is another village, called in the Hebrew and Syriac tongues Bethacharma, which also is placed upon a hill." Ver. 20. "*Sheba:*" the kingdom of Sheba in Southern Arabia, embracing the greater part of the Yemen (Dr. W. Smith), Arabia Felix; or the chief city of Yemen, the principal province of Arabia (Kalisch). *Arabic*, Seba. (Comp. Ezek. xxvii. 22.) The tribe and home of the Sabaeans in Southern Arabia (Naeg.). "*A far country:*" India; "*cane,*" brought thence in the caravans. Ver. 22. "*Sides of the earth;*" *i.e.*, most remote regions; the scenes of their captivity; and from whence they would return (ch. xxxi. 8); *Chaldea*, therefore.

3. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 1. "*Children of Benjamin:*" Jeremiah's fellow-countrymen, he being of that tribe, Anathoth being one of the cities of Benjamin. Originally the tribal territory was bounded on the north by Ephraim, and south by the hills of Jerusalem; but the limits were soon extended southward to the valley of Hinnom.

4. Natural History.—Ver. 20. "*Sweet cane:*" probably the *Calamus aromaticus*, native of Central India, remarkable for its fragrance (Dr. Royle); or it may be the lemon grass of India and Arabia (Dr. W. Smith). The sweet cane, or calamus (Exod. xxx. 23), when dried and pulverised, is richly fragrant (so *Dioscorides* informs us); while according to *Strabo* its origin must be traced to Sheba in Arabia. *Pliny* says it was common to India and Syria. The best came from India.

5. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 1. "*Set up a sign of fire:*" when the enemy approached, the besieged made their peril known and summoned assistance by raising a column of smoke in the daytime, or piling a blazing fire in the night. Or a lighted torch was "lifted up" and waved violently as a "sign" of pressing danger. Here it may mean, kindle a fire on the heights, mountain tops. Ver. 4. "Go up *at noon:*" the noon was generally too hot for aught but rest; but the eagerness of the Chaldean army is such that they are alert even at midday. Ver. 6. "*Hew trees and cast a mount:*" the besiegers in all ancient sieges ruthlessly cut down the trees around the city, and with them filled up ditches and constructed embankments. From these "*mounts*" they attacked the city (2 Sam. xx. 15; Jer. xxxii. 24). The Jews were emphatically forbidden to hew down fruit-bearing trees (Deut. xx. 19, 20). (See Addenda on ver. 6.) Ver. 9. "*Turn back thine hand:*" the gleaner is to bring his hand back again along the branches, and go carefully once more over the tendrils, lest any clusters escape: thus would Nebuchadnezzar repeat his invasions till the land was swept clean of inhabitants. Ver. 17. "*Watchmen:*" sentinels (1 Sam. xiv. 16). The watchmen patrolled the city during the night and called the hours. In times of alarm and danger, watchmen were posted in towers over the city's gates (Isa. xxi. 8, lxii. 6). They were menaced with heaviest punishments if faithless to their trust (Ezek. xxxiii. 2–6). Metaphorically, this was the office of prophets (see refs. above, and Hab. ii. 1). "*Bow and spear:*" for "bow" see notes on iv. 29, v. 16. "*Spear:*" a *javelin* for hurling at the enemy; or *lance* (ch. l. 42), used by mounted soldiers, rushing upon the enemy at full speed with lances levelled against their foe. Layard's "Mon. of Nin." show this the ordinary weapon of war used by the Babylonians. Ver. 26. "*Wallow thyself in ashes;*" to throw ashes upon the head, the symbol of intense grief (2 Sam. xiii. 19); but to "sit down in them" (Job ii. 8) is a more desperate manifestation of misery and sorrow: to "*wallow in ashes*" indicates a grief wholly unbearable; a superlative figure of wretchedness. Ver. 27–30. "*A tower and fortress to try,*" &c. (For correct rendering of words see *Lit. Crit.* below.) Metaphorical language taken from metallurgy; *smelting* and *proving ore;* "brass," "iron," "lead," "silver." In ancient times, ere the use of quicksilver was known, *lead* was employed as a flux to assist the silver to melt; its action being so penetrating that it ran through other metals, dissolving them, and gathering to itself the alloy, thus separating the precious metals from dross. But in Judah's case the smelter or assayer could obtain no pure silver at all; the refiner's art in their case failed.

6. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 1. "*Gather yourselves to flee:*" same word as in iv. 6, translated "retire:" see notes *in loc. Hend.*, "Flee for refuge;" *Keil* and *Lange*, simply "flee;" *Blayney*, "Retire in a body." "*Blow in Tekoa:*" an alliteration, תִּקְעוּ תְקוֹעַ; surely not a literary vanity, having no design beyond producing a paronomasia (as Keil conceives), but because Tekoa was the most southerly town where the fugitives would halt when driven by alarm of war from Jerusalem. Ver. 2. "*I have likened,*" *&c.* In Hosea iv. 5, this word is rendered "destroy;" *i.e., reduced to silence* by destroying. *Keil*, "I lay waste." *Speaker's Com.* retains "likened." "*Comely and delicate:*" *Speaker's Com.* takes נָוֶה as in Isa. lxv. 10, "fold;" Jer. xxiii. 3, "folds;" *i.e.*, a pasture on which "the shepherds" (ver. 3.) have made a temporary encampment; so that the verse stands in full, "To a pasturage, yea, a luxuriant, have I likened the daughter of Zion." With this interpretation ver. 3 naturally coincides. *Lange*, "Thou art like the meadow, the tenderly cared for." *Sharpe*, "I will destroy the comely and delicate daughter of Zion." Ver. 3. "*In his place;*" lit. "They shall pasture each his hand;" *i.e.*, what lies to hand, close beside him (2 Sam. xiv. 30). Ver. 4. "*Prepare war:*" *sanctify* war; *i.e.*, prepare by religious inaugurations (*cf.* Deut. xx. 2; Ezek. xxi. 21–23; Isa. xiii. 3). "*Woe unto us:*" this is an outcry, not of the assailed but the assailing armies, which lament being held back from attack till noon heat subsides (see *Manners, &c.*, on

verse above), that time sped faster than their designs; so eager were they to execute the overthrow of Judea. Ver. 5. Gives the answer of the military commanders to this impatient outcry of the Chaldean soldiery. Ver. 10. "*Word made unto them a reproach:*" a mockery, the theme of their ridicule and contempt. Ver. 14. "*Slightly:*" LXX. = "making nothing of it;" triflingly, as but a frivolous matter; as if there were nothing serious or dangerous. Ver. 15. "*Were they ashamed,*" *&c.:* not interrog. *They were put to shame;* nevertheless they are not ashamed. Ver. 16. "*The good way:*" *Keil* urges that הַטּוֹב cannot be accus. appended to, but is genit. dependent on דֶּרֶךְ; hence "way of the good;" leads to the good, to salvation; but he is alone in suggesting this. Ver. 18. "*What is among them;*" or, what happens in their midst, what befalls them. *Vulg.*, "what great things I will do to them." Ver. 25. "*Fear on every side:*" Magor-Missabib (ch. xx. 3); an ever-recurring phrase in Jeremiah's preaching (xx. 10, xlvi. 5, xlix. 29). This text, so frequently reiterated, he took from Ps. xxxi. 13; effectively expounded in his discourses, and certainly suited to his age. Ver. 27. "*Tower:*" בָּחוֹן, from בָּחַן, to *search* out, to *prove*, especially metals (Gesen.) (comp. ix. 7 and Job xxiii. 10), whence the derived noun בָּחוֹן, a trier, assayer of metals. "*Fortress:*" מִבְצָר, from בָּצַר, *to cut off, cut out, dig out*, used of metals (בֶּצֶר, *ore of gold and silver* (Job xxii. 24); the metal as *cut out* or *dug out* from mines). Although מִבְצָר is an irregular form to be derived from this root, and might have as its origin בָּצַר, to fortify, yet the previous word seems to determine its connection with metallurgy. Hence Ewald, "*a cutter of ores,*" *i.e.*, in order to separate bad metal from good. "I have set thee an assayer and tester of ores." Ver. 28. *Grievous revolters:*" סָרֵי סוֹרְרִים; paronomasia; superlative form of sentence; "rebels of rebels" (*Speaker's Com.*); "rebels of the rebellious" (Hitzig). Ver. 29. "*Bellows are burned:*" נָחַר, either Niphil of חָרַר, *to burn*, or the root נָחַר, *to snort* (cf. viii. 16), *i.e.*, blow furiously in the process of smelting the ore. *Lange, Speaker's Com.*, and *Keil* prefer the former; the very bellows are burned with the intense heat of the fire. *Hend., Rosen., Umbriet, &c.*, the latter; the roaring noise occasioned by blowing the bellows. "*Wicked are not plucked away;*" *i.e.*, separated; the dross cannot be removed by all the smelter's arts. Nothing satisfactory results; the ore is hopelessly and irremediably base.

HOMILIES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER VI.

Section 1–9. A vision of retributive war.
" 10–17. God's messenger baffled and repudiated.
" 18–26. Bitter issues of impious effrontery.
" 27–30. A frustrated ministry of grace.

Ver. 1–9. A Vision of Retributive War.

As yet no invader had set foot on the land; the city apprehended no assault: this forewarning cry (ver. 1) sounded, therefore, like a groundless alarm. But the improbable quickly glides into the actual in common life, and emphatically so in Divine providence. To ignore a warning cry is to invite the sword. God never foreshadows evil too soon, never sends a seer with message of terror without the danger being imminent, and always gives forewarning that the imperilled may escape. (See Addenda to chap. vi. ver. 1, "*Set up a sign of fire.*")

I. Vivid portrayal of imminent calamity. Clearly and forcibly delineated, so that none could plead ignorance of danger. Nor can any now hide themselves under the excuse that they knew not the calamities which menace sin. 1. *Zion offers a choice prize to the foe* (ver. 2, 3). 2. *The enemy is impatient to conquer* (ver. 4, 5). 3. *God commissions and commands the assault* (ver. 4, 6), even as He did the attack on *Job* (ii. 3–7), and on *Paul* (2 Cor. xii. 7); but in their case with how different a design and result! 4. *From the destroyer's hand none would escape* (ver. 9). (See *Manners and Customs*, above on ver. 9.) Thus "the daughter of Zion" would find the threatened evil not imaginary, or easily avoided. When God commands vengeance on those who defy or despise Him, who shall "stay His hand?" Where escape be found? "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish."

II. Urgent appeals to seek safety in retreat. Hide ere calamity comes, not delay until destruction overtakes. (*a.*) Their defenced city, Zion, though the *strongest fortress* in the land, was condemned to overthrow; therefore "flee!" (ver. 1). Equally, (*b.*) the *strongholds of sinners* will be overthrown; by *affliction, calamity,* ruthless *changes* which befall men in this life, and certainly by the *final judgment:* forsake them; "flee for refuge to the hope set before you."

1. *They would need shelter themselves* (ver. 1); though they might deem Jerusalem secure, as sinners do their "refuge of lies," God forewarned them that they would want a more safe retreat; and *He knew.* 2. *They should warn and rally their neighbours* (ver. 1), for they were involved in like doom, and needed like salvation. 3. *Timely wisdom might propitiate God and obtain mercy* (ver. 8).

III. Pathetic denunciations of their hardened impiety. No appeals, however plaintive and powerful, could rouse this guilty people to fear the evil or seek defence. 1. *Delineation of appalling guilt.* It was (*a.*) *Everywhere prevalent;* "wholly oppression" (ver. 6); every social grade lost to all except extortion and worldly aggrandisement. (*b.*) *Spontaneous and ceaseless* (ver. 7), like a stream of foul and poisonous waters which would not cease. 2. *Announcement of consequent doom.* (*a.*) *Attendant sufferings* (ver. 7), "grief and wounds;" yet alas! these did not dispose them to seek the Divine remedy, the one Physician. (*b.*) *Abandonment by God* (ver. 8). Pitifully God pleads, and expostulates, and warns (ver. 8); but the nation is unimpressionable; "desolation" therefore follows. How lamentable the contrast in Zion's condition! (ver. 3, comp. ver. 8). Sinners who despise God's warnings and mercy entail on themselves the saddest desolations.

Ver. 10–17. God's Messenger Baffled and Repudiated.

A heavy "burden of the Lord" to carry; it wearied the prophet's spirit. Who would not sorrow to "prophesy evil" against his own people? Patriotism and philanthropy alike shrink. Yet, when only by prophesying evil can the people be aroused to realise their peril and "flee," both patriotism and philanthropy urge to the sorrowful task. Then, even the meek and gentle Jesus must reiterate His "woes," and the noble-hearted Paul must "with many tears" portray his nation's spiritual blindness and doom.

I. A prophet in despair for an audience (ver. 10). "*To whom shall I speak?*" *&c.* None who either could or would "hear." 1. *Deaf;* "ear uncircumcised;" closed with a foreskin; a suggestive figure to Jews; shutting out the sound. 2. *Derisive* (see *Lit. Crit.* on verse). 3. *Depreciating;* "no delight in it;" lost all regard and desire for communications from God. Prophet found none heedful (Isa. liii. 1).

II. A prophet irresistibly constrained to preach (ver. 11). Silence was not *optional* or *possible;* speak he must, "whether men would hear or forbear." 1. *A mighty inspiration filled him.* 2. *His weakness compelled him to yield;* he grew "weary" with keeping silence and restraining the sorrowful message. 3. *The whole truth must be outpoured.* 4. *For it refers to all, and all must be forewarned.* Messages for every one, all ages included, from "children" to "aged." God's messenger must utter the truths he brings.

III. A prophet bearing evil tidings (ver. 11, 12). Bethink 1. *How unwilling is the gracious God to send them.* 2. *How dreadful is man's rebellion which necessitates them.* 3. *How beautifully the Gospel reverses them.* 4. *How, in every case, timely repentance of sin averts them* (*cf.* Jonah iii. 5).

IV. A prophet defeated by lying messengers (ver. 13–15). Forgery and falsehood tread upon the heels of truth; the "enemy" with "tares" follows the footsteps of the "sower" who carries "good seed." "Lying spirits" are ever in conflict with prophets of truth. 1. *Willing dupes.* The people were more prepared for the "false" than for the "true" (ver. 13). Sordid hearts set on this world love flat-

tery, care not for Divine communications. 2. *Plausible teachers* (ver. 14). They abound; trifle with human wrong; "heal slightly;" their influence is disastrous; *deluded* sufferers, but not deliver them. 3. *Shameless ungodliness* (ver. 15). The effect of resisting Divine messages and warnings is to harden sinners in their iniquity. Jeremiah saw that his ministry was neutralised by the false teachings which abounded, and by the impious indifference of the people.

V. A prophet treated with open repudiation (ver. 16, 17). Here is suggested, 1. *A preacher's varied modes of appeal.* (*a.*) He appealed to *their judgment:* "Stand in ways and *see;*" examine whether the "old paths" are not safest and happiest. (*b.*) To their *self-love*, their spiritual advantage: "Rest to your souls." (*c.*) To *their fears and apprehensions:* "Hearken to sound of trumpet;" the threatenings of evil. 2. *The hostile attitude of sinners.* (*a.*) They *will not stir themselves to action* (ver. 16), either to *test* whether their way is good or leads to good, nor yet to gain the "rest of soul" which God offers and they truly need: "We will not walk therein." (*b.*) *They will not listen to the voice of sacred teachers* (ver. 17); they have no desire to learn their malady, to be healed thoroughly, to be guided into the "good way," to gain the precious "rest" which Jesus gives; and they fearlessly answer all appeals from God's servants with "We will not hearken."

Ver. 18–26. Bitter Issues of Impious Effrontery.

Rejecters of God's Word imprecate His wrath (ver. 19). Defiance of His warnings and pleadings merits but brief forbearance. Insulted mercy interposes no longer between the guilty and their doom. God has other resources at command when His messages are despised. He would persuade to repentance: but, that failing, He can summon calamities and subdue those who revolt (ver. 22–26). Yet is He "slow to anger," and never calls for judgment till defiance is not alone outspoken (ver. 16, 17), but incorrigible (ver. 28). Even then God treats their case, not vengefully and imperiously, but judicially; calls them to trial and judgment, and appeals to the universe concerning the equity of His proceedings.

I. The court of witness (ver. 18, 19). God calls upon "*the nations*," Gentiles; "*the congregation*," probably counsellors of state; "*the earth*," *i.e.*, all humanity, to observe His procedure with these Jewish criminals. It foreshadows another judgment, to be conducted in the sight of the whole universe. How appalling the event! how solemnly does God conduct the sinner's trial!

II. The offender arraigned. Who is the criminal? (ver. 19), "*this people.*" God emphasises the identity: "*this* people." Not a people without a history, without national distinction, without a noble ancestry, without religious advantages, without inducements to piety. Every item relating to "this people" formed a *reason* for faithful, loving allegiance with their God, and a *protest* against their sin.

III. The accusation against Judah (ver. 19). It was not so much *practical* irreligion, though practices were evil and loathsome (ver. 13, 15); it was the *alienation of the intelligence and heart*, expressed here as "*fruit of their thoughts.*" "An evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." This showed itself in their effrontery,—meeting God's pleadings with an unblushing refusal (ver. 16, 17): "Paid no heed to My words, and My law have they spurned." Insolent indifference to God.

IV. The mocking pretence of piety (ver. 20). They made a "fair show" of religion, though their heart had revolted. "To *obey* is better than sacrifice, and to *hearken* than the fat of rams." God repudiates a religion of ritual: "He looketh at the heart." This blatant hypocrisy, keeping up a parade of loyalty to God while their "thoughts" were estranged and hostile, made them more criminal and offensive. It amounted to a *confession* that they knew Jehovah deserved worship, yet, "knowing the Lord's will, they did it not."

V. The sentence of retribution (ver. 21). 1. The Author of calamity: "I will

lay," &c. 2. The *form* of calamity: "stumbling-blocks," *i.e.*, incursions of Babylonians. 3. The *distresses* of calamity: "they shall *fall*, . . . shall *perish*." 4. The *devastations* of calamity: totality is implied in the enumeration of "fathers and sons together, neighbour and friend."

VI. The avenging scourge (ver. 22, 23). 1. *Remote:* "north, sides of earth." 2. *Mighty:* "great nation." 3. *Warlike:* "lay hold on bow," &c. 4. *Barbarous:* "cruel, no mercy." 5. *Ferocious:* "voice roareth," &c. 6. *Determined:* "ride on horses, set in array as men for war," &c. Consider, therefore, that a *messenger with gracious words* from God being rejected, *emissaries with avenging wrath* from God will follow.

VII. The consternation of the condemned (ver. 24, 25). 1. *The terror of anticipation* (ver. 24) suggests the sinner's anguish of fear, dreading death, and meeting the Judge, and enduring the dire sentence beyond. 2. *Hiding from destruction* (ver. 25), even as in Rev. vi. 15 *et seq.*

VIII. The anguish of punishment (ver. 26). 1. *Abject wretchedness:* "wallow in ashes." 2. *Excruciating grief:* "most bitter lamentation." 3. *Melancholy loss:* "as for only son," for "spoiler come upon us." The loss of God's love, the sacred inheritance, inward peace, all comfort; and the endurance of shame, misery, and bitter oppression. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Oh, that the "*mourning*" were *timely*,—not after the ruin as a *fruitless consequence*, but before the ruin as a *preventative*. For penitential tears might avert the doom. Weeping for suffering brings no remedy, but weeping for sin ere judgment comes, prepares the mourner to welcome the Saviour.

Ver. 27–30. A Frustrated Ministry of Grace.

(See *Lit. Crit.* on verses.) In language of metallurgy, God sets forth the design of Jeremiah's ministry in the midst of Judah, and the hopeless moral condition of the nation; for not even the most earnest efforts to call them back to true religion could regenerate or restore a people so irremediably debased. (See Addenda to chap. vi. 30, "*Reprobate silver.*")

I. A tentative ministry (ver. 27). "An assayer and tester of metals." God's preachers prove their hearers, test their real state, their thoughts and aims, their spiritual attitude. Even as with our *Lord* (Matt. iii. 12); and the *Word of God* (Heb. iv. 12, 13).

II. Base material (ver. 28). Either (1.) *their ignoble quality;* mere "copper and iron," not silver and gold; or (2.) *their obduracy;* hard and defiant. Described as "*revolters;*" *i.e.*, they resist good: "*walk with slanders;*" *i.e.*, they deprecate good; "*all corrupters;*" *i.e.*, they mar and spoil whatever good they hear or find; communicate their own badness to others.

III. Unavailing remedies. 1. *Intense zeal* effected nothing. Jeremiah's fervour, metaphorically suggested in the "bellows" which became burned by the very fierceness of the heat produced, indicates the prophet's self-consuming earnestness to reform Judah. 2. *Prolonged endeavours* proved impotent. The smelter continued his toils and kept the heat at full glow till the very "lead was consumed." 3. *Evil was inseparable.* The founder's work could not effect a separation of Judah from her corruptions and idolatries (John iii. 19; Matt. xxiii. 37).

IV. Hopeless abandonment. 1. *God despairs of them;* gives over any further effort to restore them to piety. 2. *God surrenders them;* as worthless: no longer will He claim them, or own them. "*None of His,*" is the sentence of their irrevocable doom. They are "cast away." All divine grace and forbearance became lost upon them; they frustrated every effort on God's part for their good. He came seeking fruit, yet found not. Regenerative aids were applied (Luke xiii. 8); opportunity was patiently allowed for utilising advantages; all failed, and the tree was cut down, for it "cumbered the ground." The lesson: "Except repent, likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 5).

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON VERSES OF CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* IRONICAL CALLS TO SALVATION.

Impossible that the prophet could encourage hope that they would escape the foe by quitting Jerusalem—the fortress most capable of resisting the Chaldean army—and securing themselves in Tekoa and Bethhaccerem. The call is full of irony: Seek a secure refuge from the advancing enemy, and evade God's threatened judgments if any method of escape avail: none shall be found, destructions will be great. Let the soul who is without Christ, defenceless against death and judgment, see well to his resources of safety when "sudden destruction cometh upon him."

I. Mocking challenges. Having refused God's salvation, save yourselves! Desert the Rock of Ages; shelter yourselves in a more secure fortress. Rejecting Divine grace, take care of your own spiritual interests. Apply to *rejecters of Christ, self-righteous, fatalists.*

1. *Leave your impregnable fortress,* on whose strength you complacently relied: "Flee out of Jerusalem." When the peril and panic come, men will see at once they must surrender their old defences, their cherished delusions, their refuted theories, their failing hopes.

2. *Find a safe retreat,* if you can. Tekoa is the *remotest* city of defence, most distant from the foe who advances from the north; flee to that. Or, if you deem a *mountain height* safer, hasten to Bethhaccerem. Is there *no sure refuge* for the soul which finds itself suddenly driven forth from its complacent assurances, its falling strongholds? "Oh where can rest be found?"

3. *Defend yourselves against assault.* "Blow a trumpet;" muster all your forces of resistance." Struggle with the foe ere you yield: do not let *death* easily vanquish you; will not courage serve you in that emergency? will not your righteousness save you from the charges of the foe? "When the enemy cometh in like a flood," when Justice calls the sinner to God's bar, let him summon to his aid all his resources of self-sufficiency, and stand in his own integrity if he can.

4. *Rally others to resistance of the foe.* "Set up sign," &c. Warn them of peril, point them to safety; for none should limit his efforts to self-salvation. Let those who can *save themselves* lend aid also to others. "Each is his brother's keeper;" owes duties of help and deliverance to those in peril. Will they who are secure in their own religious theories and refuges "rescue the perishing," and save him that hath no helper? That is a poor substitute for Christianity which leaves a soul so impotent that it has no hope or help to spare for others in danger. A Christian is both *saved himself,* and he can "*save a soul from death*" (Jas. v. 20).

II. Menacing realities. Man's resources of salvation are mere *fictions,* but the perils from which he needs salvation are appalling *facts.*

1. *Insecure defences.* Zion would become a retreat at the first (ch. iv. 6); yet here the refugees and residents within Jerusalem are forwarned that its fortifications would not protect them. The *stoutest stronghold would fail.* No security in which the sinner intrenches himself will prove a source of safety when the "evil" comes. Our defences cannot keep out *sorrow,* nor *conscience,* nor *terror* of an outraged God, nor *death,* nor the *punishments of sin.*

2. *Invincible foes.* Irresistible in their force, and Divinely authorised in their assault, certain therefore to conquer. Ours is an unequal war with powers mightier than we, a hopeless struggle against the *evils* which God lets loose upon those who refuse His salvation. Confront them not; brave not rashly the fearful issues. "A *prudent* man foreseeth the evil, and *hideth himself.*" "Flee for refuge," &c.

3. *Inevitable ruin.* "A great destruction." "*Great*" in *what it destroys:* God's nation; the human soul; precious hopes. "Great" in the *completeness of the overthrow:* dire devastation; irremediable ruin. For no

ray of light illumes the profound gloom of man's final appalling overthrow. "Seek ye the Lord; seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

Ver. 2. *Theme:* DELICACY AND DESIRABLENESS OF ZION.

(*a.*) *As a possession of God's people.* No spot so sacred, so restful, so longed for, so beloved. Type of the Christian's home.

(*b.*) *As a prize for the spoiler.* Every nation coveted it, and fought for it. Even as—if Milton be right—Satan conspired to grasp the Eternal City of light, and as sinners still crave to secure it; for every man eyes the splendid prize. "Blessed are they that *have right to enter* through the gates into the city." (cf. Rev. xxii. 14, 15). Contemplate the:

I. Pre-eminent graces Divinely lavished upon her. "Beautiful for situation," &c. Her temple the "perfection of beauty." The pride and glory of God's people. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." Suggests the *Celestial City*, the "realm and home" of Christ's redeemed people (Rev. xxi.).

II. Honours and privileges enjoyed within her.

To "ascend the hill of the Lord, and stand within His holy place," was the rapturous dream of Jewish youths, the holiest joy of devout Israelites. "Thither the tribes go up." With songs to Zion: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," &c. There realised "in Thy presence fulness of joy."

III. Sacred facts attested by her history.

That "God will in very deed dwell with man upon the earth;" that He has "desired to dwell" amid His people; that propitiation may be made before Him, and offerings presented for His acceptance; that "streams make glad the city of God,"

"Streams of mercy never ceasing;"

that there may be blessed communication between "God who is in heaven, and man upon the earth;" that "the High Priest enters into the holy place for us," and we are free to seek God's face.

IV. Glorious promises encircling her future.

Nations shall gather there; God's light shine thence; millennial glories centre there (Isa. ii. 2–4). And when "the first earth shall have passed away" (Rev. xxi. 1), then the *New Jerusalem* shall "descend out of heaven from God, having the glory of God," and "the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it;" while "the glory and honour of the nations" shall be accumulated within it.

Within *that* "holy city" only they can have a place "who are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Note: The word "*woman*" is not in the Hebrew text; some supply the word *pasturage*:—I have likened the daughter of Zion to an inviting and luxuriant pasturage.

1. Where only the flock of God may feed. 2. Where green pastures and still waters abound. 3. Where the Good Shepherd guards the sheep He "knows." 4. Wherein no "ravening wolf" may intrude. 5. Where blessed rest of soul may be enjoyed.

Ver. 3. Comments:

"*Shepherds*," *i.e.*, hostile leaders; "*with their flocks*," *i.e.*, armies (*cf.* i. 15, iv. 17, xlix. 20, l. 45); "*pitch their tents*," besiege; "*feed every one in his place*," consume all that is near him; so abundant is the pasturage, the treasures, that each one is satiated with the booty he plunders. The Chaldean princes with their armies would sack Jerusalem, consuming and appropriating all her rich possessions.

Ver. 4, 5. *Theme:* IMPATIENCE TO POSSESS JERUSALEM.

The sentences arrange themselves thus:

I. A royal proclamation of war. This emanates from the palace at Babylon: "Prepare ye war against her." Yet it originates with the King of kings, whose will Nebuchadnezzar works out. "Prepare:" properly *sanctify* war. Religious solemnities always preceded war in ancient times.

This royal summons implied *a set purpose*, due *preparation*, and *prompt action*.

Christ calls His army to war against "spiritual wickedness in high places;" and on their part there must be (*a.*) *set purpose*; (*b.*) *religious preparation*; (*c.*) *prompt action*.

"Soldiers of Christ, arise!"

The King of kings calls His forces to conflict (Eph. vi. 11 *et seq.*).

II. The eagerness of invading armies. No sooner commissioned than they encourage each other to instant and concerted action. "Arise, and let us go up *at noon!*"

(*a.*) Their *impatience* of conquest; would make assault at once.

(*b.*) Their *indifference* as to convenience or comfort; "at noon," though the scorching sun usually led to suspension of hostility until the fierce heat was gone.

All this should have analogy in *our* efforts to *win the kingdom;* delaying not an hour, disregarding all thought of "*a more convenient season.*" "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "Arise, and let us go up!"

III. A cry of restless disappointment. "Woe unto us, for the day goeth away," &c. (See Addenda to chap. vi. 4, "*Propitious opportunities lost.*")

(*a.*) *Propitious hours for acquiring conquest soon end.* They set to the task promptly, yet the "day went away" all too quickly; "the shadows of evening" fell upon them with their designs incomplete. "*The night cometh!*" "What thou doest, do quickly." Nevertheless, the light fades too soon, our plans are not accomplished so *easily* or so *early* as we had thought. "Redeem the time."

(*b.*) *Delay in conquest lamented as a grievous loss.* "Alas! for us." They feel themselves seriously to be losers by even a temporary postponement of victory. And are we not *sufferers*, lamentably *losers*, by the delay of *spiritual conquests?* Every hour which interposes between us and the accomplishment of our aims, in seeking victory over sin and hostile forces, and in attempting to possess ourselves of the Divine heritage, is a painful loss, a personal calamity. With alacrity let us besiege the kingdom, losing not an hour.

IV. No obstacle should defer their assault. "Arise, let us go *by night!*" Not even the darkness should stay their zeal.

(*a.*) *Their dauntless purpose;* nothing deters or defeats them. "The king's business requires haste." Determination despises difficulties.

(*b.*) *The unfavourable season.* How many have their "*night season*," all dark and bewildering: yet keep on vigorously, not suspending your efforts to gain victory over evil, to seize the prize, to secure the precious spoils of the kingdom. Wrestle on, as did Jacob, through the night.

(*c.*) *Rewards encouraged their persistence;* "palaces." These contained rare treasures and vast wealth; hence their zeal. But who wins the "kingdom of heaven" by determined assault gains "unsearchable riches" and "many mansions." Arise! let us claim those palaces.

Ver. 6. *Theme:* SET APART FOR JUDGMENT. "*This is the city to be visited.*"

God points out Jerusalem to the invaders: their stroke must not miss its true mark; judgment shall not miscarry. He leads forth the guilty one to her merited doom; He leads on His ministers of justice to the right transgressor. How terrifying this thought: a soul branded, set apart, delivered over to the "due reward of sin"!

I. Individuality of the transgressor. "This is the city." Each stands out distinct in the Divine gaze. We are *not massed together* in a general estimate by God. "*Every one* shall give account of *himself* to God." Each sinner dwells alone in God's thoughts. Therefore, "though hand join in hand," God does not lose sight of the individuality of each; He discriminates. *You* are distinctively watched by the EYE which never errs.

II. Definiteness of human sin. "She

is wholly oppression." All sin is not alike, either in *nature* or *degree*. The "Judge of all" distinguishes; associates the *special iniquity* with the *individual transgressor*. "He sets our *secret sin* in the light of His countenance." Jerusalem is "*oppression;*" that is her distinctive crime: she is "*wholly* oppression;" that marks the extent of her criminality. *Your sin* is known to God; and "be sure *your sin* will find you out."

III. **Public presentation of the criminal.** "*This* is the city." God exposes her to view; of *angels*, that they may know how "righteous are His judgments;" of *men*, fellow-sinners, that they may be warned, lest they "come into like condemnation;" of *foes*, that their assault may be directed to the right object; for "every one shall *bear his own iniquity*." The great judgment of men will be public, and the transgressor will be placed in the open gaze of the universe.

IV. **Deliberate consignment to punishment.** "The city *to be visited*," punished. What! so fair a city, so delicate (ver. 2), so long honoured by God, "the joy of the whole earth," the "city of the great King"! Ask you *incredulously*, Can a soul, so noble, formed for God, long privileged with sacred favours, be abandoned to foes? Look for answer on Jerusalem, ravaged and consumed with fire! Beauty only intensified her loathsomeness when linked to villany. Nobleness adds to the horrors of degradation when it becomes prostituted to baseness. Shall God spare Jerusalem, or us, because of an *historic dignity?* That fact increases our guilt, for we *abused* our birthright, sold it for a mess of pottage. "The *righteousness* of the righteous shall *not deliver him* in the day of *his transgression*" (Ezek. xxxiii. 12). "Depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity." "If any man draw back, *My soul shall have no pleasure in him*" (Heb. x. 38).

Ver. 7. *Theme:* SPONTANEITY AND SPOLIATIONS OF GUILT. "As a fountain casteth out her waters," &c.

Within ourselves is such a fountain. From the fount of evil, even in *childhood*, flows such waters as disobedience, passion, falsehood, &c. In *youth*, they flow more abundantly, "increase unto more ungodliness;" impurity, vanity, wilfulness, outraging conscience, wronging Christ, &c. In *maturity* the streams pour forth in steady, habitual wrong: "All the imaginations of the heart are only evil continually." Such the case of a depraved heart, into which no purifying grace enters. Yet, as the tree cast into the bitter waters made them sweet (Exod. xv. 25), so Divine love can make all the outgoings of the human heart pure and good.

I. **The exhaustless outflow of sin.**

1. As something which is *natural to us:* "Casteth out *her* waters, *her* wickedness." Leave ourselves free, and sin follows naturally.

2. As something which *easily gratifies itself:* the waters flow forth spontaneously, without effort. We "enjoy the pleasures of sin." Wrong-doing is congenial, gratifying. "Out of the heart *proceed* (easily and pleasurably) evil thoughts," &c.

3. As something which *has a perennial source.* Its waters never pause. The more we sin, the more copious our capacity and versatile our resources of sinning. Guilt never runs dry. "*As a fountain*," whose waters ceaselessly flow, sin will not be restrained; it will find and force a way out.

4. As something which *pours itself out in plenitude.* Good and gracious thoughts and deeds come forth even from the best of us in feeble quantities; but the heart "*casts out* her wickedness" in full flow: "Out of the *abundance* of the heart." What copious streams of evil flow forth from one sinner! What *magnitude* of sins in one life, one day! If they could be reckoned up! (See Addenda to chap. vi. 7, "*Continuity of sin.*")

II. **The woful outrages of sin.** "Violence and spoil," &c.

The outflow of sin is pleasurable to the sinner; it is gratifying as being natural. It costs no effort or restraint. But it *works direful ravages on others—e.g.*, drunkenness, libertinism, extortion

malice, &c., destroys homes, breaks hearts. Like deadly blight across fair plantation, or fire over golden harvest fields. Look on the disease and death in the world, all the bitter effects of sin.

1. *The external wrongs done by sin.* "Violence and spoil."

2. *The internal wounds suffered by the sinner.* "Grief and wounds."

Man estimates the *external* ravages of sin above the *internal* miseries; he *cries out* because of "violence," &c.; he laments the *misfortunes*, the "spoil," which sin brings upon his life.

But *God looks within.* "*Before Me* continually is grief and wounds." What a spectacle of *inward corruption* does the eye of God behold! Oh, the *hidden griefs* of sinners! How dreadful the spoliations of conscience, of affections, of the godlike soul!

There avails for us the healing, redeeming grace of Jesus. He is "acquainted with *grief*," our grief; and He can heal our "*wounds*," for "He was wounded for our transgressions, and with His stripes we are healed."

Ver. 8. *Theme:* GOD'S UNWILLING SEPARATION FROM JUDAH. "Lest my soul depart from thee."

It implies *God's soul* was knit to, fixed upon His people. "Depart," is a strongly expressive word; *be torn from thee.* "God was tenderly attached to the holy city, had chosen to put His name there, and nothing but the extreme wickedness of its inhabitants could have moved Him to withdraw His affection from it."—*Henderson.*

"*Note:* 1. The God of mercy is loth to depart even from a provoking people, and is earnest with them by true repentance and reformation to prevent things from coming to that extremity. 2. Their case is very miserable from whom God's soul is disjoined; it intimates the loss not only of outward blessings, but of those comforts and favours which are the more immediate and peculiar tokens of His love and presence. 3. Those who forsake God are certainly undone; when God's soul departs from Jerusalem she soon becomes desolate and uninhabited (Matt. xxiii. 38)."—*M. Henry.*

i. *The infinite goodness and patience of God towards a sinful people,* and His great unwillingness to bring ruin upon them.

ii. *The proper and effectual means of preventing the misery and ruin of a sinful people.* "Be thou instructed."

iii. *The miserable case and condition of a people* when God takes off His affection from them.—*Tillotson.* (See Addenda to chap. vi. 8, "*God's withdrawment from man.*")

Ver. 9. Comments:

The Jews are the grapes, too choice to let any remain unplucked; the Chaldeans are the unsparing gleaners, intent on thoroughly cleansing the vine of all its valuable produce.

As the vintagers return again and again to the vine so long as any clusters can be gathered, so would the Babylonians renew their invasions till all Judah was carried into captivity, and the land left bare: "They shall *thoroughly glean*," &c.

This is God's address to the Chaldeans, "*Turn back thine hand*," &c.; and they literally obeyed the Divine bidding (*cf.* lii. 28–30). (See Addenda to chap. vi. 9, "*Glean Israel as a vine.*")

Ver. 10. *Theme:* PREACHING RENDERED USELESS.

This is marvellous, that words from God could become void of effect. For bethink:

1. That preaching is God's chosen method of awakening and conversion.

2. That preaching is the appropriate and established agency by which the Holy Spirit works in quickening human souls.

3. That there is a conscience in man upon which Divine messages act with startling force.

4. That the Word of God is itself quick and powerful.

5. That manifold Divine promises guarantee the preacher against failure when speaking for God. Yet text.

I. A bearer of tidings from Heaven finds none to whom to address them. He stands like one who arrives with a proclamation on the borders of an un-

inhabited desert, bewildered to discover no hearers. What is he to do? The case is no better when a preacher finds hearers, but they *refuse him a hearing*, or let him preach on *without the slightest heed*. The prophet is:

1. *In distress that none were prepared to regard his "warnings;"* amazed at their stolidity, defiant unconcern, immovable complacency, indifference to peril. Men still obdurate and frivolous.

2. *In perplexity as to what course to adopt to enlist their attention.* He could, of course, "speak and give warning;" but he wished so to do this "*that they may hear.*" Always the preacher's perplexity, how to arouse men's serious heed to the things he speaks. Without this responsive attention, the preacher warns to no purpose, without hope of success. Paul tried all resources (1 Cor. ix. 20–23). Yet *what solemn tidings* Jeremiah brought! What "*glad tidings*" the Christian preacher brings! (Isa. lii. 7–10).

II. Men who need these tidings from Heaven are without capacity for hearing Divine truths. Other sounds can enter their ears, but not sounds from Heaven. *A whisper from earth* concerning "earthly things" is instantly and eagerly heard, but the *thunder's roar from the skies* concerning "heavenly things" finds them deaf to sound. Why? "*Their ear is uncircumcised.*"

1. They *do not want to hear:* hearing disquiets them.

2. They *do not intend to hear:* have resolved to hear nothing from God, nothing against themselves or their sins. Thus "they cannot hearken." *Prejudice* deafens men; *unbelief* deafens; *wilful ignorance* deafens (comp. Gal. iii. 1). Hence men hear from God and of Christ in vain. Yet THEY NEED *these tidings.* Judah did, so as *to escape destruction* which was imminent. We need tidings from Heaven, for they announce the *only salvation available*, the Jesus our souls want.

III. Divine messages repelled by men with antipathy and scorn.

Note: The prophet's cry of amazement and fear. "*Behold* the word," &c. It fills him with alarm. To trifle with *words from Jehovah!* To throw from us the saving truths of the Gospel! How astounding man's conduct in putting aside with heedlessness the invaluable messages of Heaven! (See Addenda to chap. vi. 10, "*God's Word; no delight in it.*")

1. *God's chiding words are resented as a calumny,* as an undeserved "reproach;" they felt themselves aggrieved and affronted by the remonstrances and condemnations Jeremiah brought. What blinding pride, what besotting vanity this reveals! They determine not to hearken to God's Word because it lashes their sins.

2. *God's pleading words are received with contumely;* depreciated and derided as being uncalled for. What had they to fear? They saw no danger, recognised no urgency in propitiating God. "They have *no delight* in it," means they turn away with aversion, they appreciate not the Divine mercy which sends the "Word;" they believe not in the necessity for such a message. Hence they scorn. "They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof" (Prov. i. 30). *Jerome* remarks: "Inability ["*they cannot hearken*"] which proceeds from scorn and unbelief is not exempted from punishment." God must rebuke such wilful insensibility (comp. ver. 19).

Ver. 11–13. PREACHING MADE INEVITABLE.

If men repudiate the preacher's word (see above on ver. 10), may he keep silence? *Silence is impossible*, he cannot restrain himself; *speech is imperative*, for God commands him to speak: "Pour it out." God's communications to him must be communicated to men. "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." Thus utterance is necessitated:

I. By the irresistible force of inward Divine impulse. "I *am full* of the fury of the Lord; I *am weary* with holding in."

1. *How unwilling* to proclaim the evil tidings! Sad task for God's messenger. "Tell you *even weeping.*"

2. How *exhausting* the burden of the Lord! "Wearies" the heart. Painful to have to utter sad truths; *more painful to refrain.*

"God's anger at the wickness of the people had been, as it were, poured into Jeremiah's heart, and he tried to restrain it in vain."—*Speaker's Com.*

This "*fury*" was not Jeremiah's *holy ardour*, which was irrepressible in him, but *burning displeasure* Divinely awakened in him towards the insensate nation. "The fury *of the Lord*," which did not refer to or reflect upon himself, therefore must not be kept to himself, but *poured out.*

II. By the necessity of society to hear the Divine threatenings. 1. Whether they *wish to hear them or not.* 2. Whether they *regard and act upon them or not.* 3. Whether *they profit by their hearing*, or, *by abusing warning, increase their condemnation.* God (*a.*) *allows none to dwell in ignorance;* He "sets before us life and death;" (*b.*) *leaves man without excuse;* if he despise warning and perish, his blood is upon his own head. But, whether as "life unto life, or death unto death," men must hear.

III. By the inclusive application of the solemn messages. They relate to all ages and sexes. (See Addenda to chap. vi. 11.)

1. *The inclusive consequences of sin.* From "child" to "aged," "man and wife," all had sinned,—all condemned. "So death passed upon all, for that all have sinned." Disease of sin is upon all.

2. *The comprehensive displeasure of God.* "Pour it out" (the fury of the Lord), upon the *children, young men, parents, of ripe years*, and *very aged.* This anger of God is justified by ver. 13.

IV. By the terrible character of the nearing woes (ver. 12).

1. *The merciless severity of the invading foe.* Less severe than "our adversary the devil" (1 Pet. v. 8; Rev. xii. 12; Luke xii. 5).

2. *The clear and emphatic predictions of these woes.* (See Deut. xxviii. 30.) *Possessions greatly prized*, "houses and fields;" *treasures jealously guarded*, "wives." Homes seized, affections disregarded, life's dearest ties severed. So in the "judgment to come," sinners will *lose all* they had, and be sundered from all they love. Our woe, if unsaved, is clearly foretold (Heb. x. 26–29).

3. *The hand of God will accomplish the sinner's overthrow.* "For I will stretch out my hand," &c. (*cf.* Heb. x. 30, 31).

V. By the appalling corruptions which invoked the judgments (ver. 13). Against such sinfulness the preacher must protest and pronounce. Amid such a corrupted society, God's messenger can only utter *woes.* He has no promise or pleading for men sunk in wilful and defiant iniquity. (See Addenda to chap. vi. 13, "*Covetousness.*")

"*Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.*"

Ver. 14. *Theme:* HEALING OUR WOUNDS SLIGHTLY. (See Addenda to chap. vi. 14, "*Peace where no peace.*")

Accommodating prophets, who taught delusions, because corrupt hearers said, "Prophesy unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits." Thus lulled to sleep in their sins, while heaviest judgments of God impended. Lament such delusive ministrations (Ezek. xiii. 22; Deut. xxix. 19, 20). Yet men love to deceive themselves, to silence convictions of conscience. Show:

I. What need we all have of healing. Sin has affected all the powers of our souls. 1. *Asserted in Scriptures.* 2. *Confirmed by experience.* But, as many think themselves healed whilst in perishing condition, show:

II. Who they are that heal their wounds slightly. 1. *They who rely on the uncovenanted mercy of God*, fatally deceive their souls by expecting mercy contrary to Gospel. 2. *They who take refuge in a round of duties;* no attainments can stand in the place of Christ

(Phil. iii. 9). 3. *They who rest in a faith that is unproductive of good works;* but the faith that apprehends Christ will "work by love," and "purify the heart," and "overcome the world."

III. How we may have them healed effectually.

1. *The Lord Jesus has provided a remedy for sin* (Isa. liii. 5). 2. *That remedy applied by faith shall be effectual for all who trust in it* (Isa. i. 18).

Address: i. *Those who feel not their need of healing.* Christianity is a *remedy*, and presupposes a deep *malady*, which nothing finite can heal. ii. *Those who, after having derived some benefits from Christ, have relapsed into sin.* If continue thus, "last end worse than first" (Jer. iii. 12). iii. *Those who are enjoying health in their souls.* A man under power of sin feels spiritual duties irksome; but he whose "soul prospers, and is in health," finds the ways of God full of delight.—*Simeon.*

Theme: EVILS OF FALSE SECURITY. Though people live thoughtlessly about their souls, they generally satisfy themselves with some maxim of security: on the strength of this they hush within them every alarm of conscience. A large class of such slender and sentimental religionists, who profess reverence, maintain outward decencies, are visited with occasional tender thoughts of its solemnities, would be shocked at infidel opinion, and have their minds comfortably made up. Yet in their tranquillity there is not a single ingredient of the Gospel, "joy and peace in believing."

This *deceitful complacency* needs *salutary alarm.* How is it persons reach this state of easy confidence?

1. There is a disposition to *acknowledge*, in a general way, *that they are sinners*, though also to palliate the enormity of sin, and to gloss it over with the gentle epithet of an infirmity.

2. Then to make all right, and secure, and comfortable, the sentiment is cherished that *God is a merciful God, and will overlook our infirmities.*

A slight hurt needs but a slight remedy; being but gently alarmed, a gentle application avails to pacify.

I. This mercy, so slenderly spoken of and vaguely trusted in, is not the mercy which has been made the subject of an actual offer from God to man. He has stepped forth to relieve us from the debt of sin; but He has taken His own way of it (John iii. 36).

II. The evils of such a false confidence. 1. *It casts an aspersion on the character of God.* Those who find their way to comfort without any reference to Christ, ignore God's truth or His righteousness; His threatenings, purposes, the everlasting distinction between obedience and sin, &c., become a meaningless parade. 2. *It is hostile to the cause of practical righteousness.* Though a man confess to "infirmities," he will smother all apprehensions, and regale his fancy with the smile of an indulgent God. It tends to obliterate all restraints, on the specious plea of all-availing mercy, and leaves every man to sin just as much as he likes. Thus "peace, where there is no peace," spreads its deadly poison over the face of society, and a sentiment of deep and fatal tranquillity concerning salvation and God's demands on the soul takes up its firm residence in a world which sends up a cry of rebellion against Him. This is a sore evil.—*Chalmers.*

Ver. 15. *Theme:* SHAMELESSNESS IN SIN THE CERTAIN FORERUNNER OF DESTRUCTION.

He who has thus sinned himself past feeling, may be justly supposed to have sinned himself past grace.

i. *Extraordinary guilt.* "They had committed abomination."

ii. *Their deportment under their guilt.* "They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush."

iii. *God's high resentment of their monstrous shamelessness*, implied in the vehement interrogation, "Were they ashamed?"

iv. *The judgment consequent thereupon.* "Therefore shall they fall," &c.

I. Show what shame is, and its influence upon men's manners.

II. By what ways men come to cast off shame, and grow impudent in sin. 1. By the commission of great sins. 2.

Custom in sinning. 3. Criminal example of great persons. 4. General and common practice. 5. To have been once greatly and irrecoverably ashamed.

III. The several degrees of shamelessness in sin. 1. Showing respect to sinful persons. 2. Defending sin. 3. Glorying in it.

IV. Why it brings down judgment and destruction upon the sinner. 1. Because shamelessness in sin presupposes a long course of sin. 2. Because of its destructive influence upon the government of the world.

V. What those judgments are by which it procures the sinner's destruction. Scripture supplies instances of judgment on shameless sinners. 1. A sudden and disastrous death: *e.g.*, Zimri, slain by sword of Phinehas. 2. War and desolation: *e.g.*, Benjamites (Judges xix., xx.). 3. Captivity: *e.g.*, Judah, whom the prophet here denounces.

Where there is no place for *shame*, there can be "no place for repentance." Shamelessness means impenitence, and impenitence, destruction.—*R. South, D.D.*

Ver. 16. *Theme:* THE OLD PATHS.

I. The denomination: "Old paths," *i.e.*, way of obedience, worship, piety. "Old," because: 1. *Ordained from eternity.* 2. *Herein all the saints have walked.* 3. *Tried*, and found pleasant and profitable.

II. The description: "Good way." A path may be "old," yet not "good;" this is both. When may a path be called "good"? 1. When *safe.* 2. *Direct.* 3. *Frequented.* 4. *Pleasant.* 5. *Firm and passable.*

III. The directions: "Stand, see, ask, walk." None can find this path at random, none walk in it ignorant of where they are. They who seek this path should be: 1. *Cautious in their observations.* 2. *Earnest in their inquiries.* 3. *Prompt in entering thereon.*

IV. The destination: "Ye shall find rest to your souls." 1. *In the journey* many blessings of rest will be enjoyed, as contentment, satisfaction, cheerfulness, security. 2. *Afterwards* there will be fulness of rest: the path leads to eternal repose, happiness, glory.

It is the *path of faith;* they who tread it first journey to the cross; then, leaning on arm of the Beloved, travel to home of saints. Christ beckons to all who inquire, and says, "I am the Way."—"*Sermon Framework.*"

Theme: THE GOOD OLD WAY.

Whatever bears stamp of antiquity upon it finds favourable reception; innovations are distrusted. Inquire:

I. What is that old and good way? Not *holiness* alone, but, 1. *A penitential affiance in God*, through Christ's mediation (John xiv. 6). 2. *A cheerful obedience to Him:* "Take my yoke," &c. (Matt. xi. 29). Both of these bear mark of *antiquity*, from "righteous Abel" downwards. And they must be *good*, for (*a.*) Appointed by God Himself. (*b.*) Approved by all His saints. (*c.*) Tend to the perfecting of our nature; and (*d.*) To the adornment of our religion.

II. What is our duty respecting it? It becomes us, 1. *To inquire after it;* not presume we are right, but "stand and see;" ask those whom God has appointed as guides, search sacred oracles, implore teaching of Holy Spirit. 2. *To walk in it.* Knowledge useless without practice. *Come into it*, renouncing every other: *continue* in it.

III. Encouragement given to us. They who walk herein shall find: 1. *Rest in their way* (Rom. v. 1, 2). "The work of righteousness is peace," &c. 2. *Rest in their end.* "Rest remaining to the people of God."—*Hannum.*

I. The way. This cannot be the way of the wicked (Ps. xxxvi. 4). It is the way of *scriptural piety;* the course of *faith and love.* Called "a way," because leads to enjoyment of eternal life (Matt. vii. 14); is the *certain* way to it (Rom. ii. 7), and the *only* way (Heb. xii. 14).

1. *Called the old way. Moses* was actuated by *faith* (Heb. xi. 24–27); and taught the way of *love* (Deut. vi. 4, 5). Old as the days of *Noah* (Heb. xi. 7) and *Enoch* (Gen. v. 24). Certainly for us as old as Christianity (John xiv. 1, xv. 12).

2. *Called the good way;* for those

walking in it *are* good (Jas. iii. 17); and *do* good—to their families (Deut. v. 29), their country (Prov. xiv. 34), and to the world (Matt. v. 13, 14). And the *way itself is good;* in its origin (Ps. cxliii. 10), and its tendency (Prov. xix. 23).

II. God's command.

1. "*Stand ye in the ways and see.*" (1.) Some facts are here assumed: that though but one good way, there are *many evil ways;* that *all men are walking in evil ways* (Isa. liii. 6); that *we are naturally ignorant* of the good old way (Jer. x. 23); yet we are *capable of discovering and walking* in it. (2.) Some duties are here enjoined: make an *immediate pause* for purposes of examination; "*stand*" (Hag. i. 5); *seriously examine* in what way you are walking; "*see*" (2 Cor. xiii. 5); observe well *the tendency of evil ways* (Rom. vi. 21).

2. "*Ask for the old paths, where is the good way.*" Inquire by searching Scriptures (John v. 39); asking direction of God (Jas. i. 5); associating with the pious (Prov. xiii. 20).

3. "*And walk therein.*" (1.) Get into it: not remain out of it, by delay (Job xxii. 21, xxxvi. 18); not stop short of it, by resting in deficient attainment, merely talking of, thinking about, or desiring it (Matt. xi. 29; John xiv. 6). (2.) Keep in it: by resisting temptation (1 Pet. v. 8, 9; Luke xxi. 36), by improving in piety (2 Cor. vii. 1).

III. The promise. "Rest for your souls."

1. *The blessing* promised. (1.) In this world: from anguish of guilt (Isa. xii. 5); from oppression of Satan (Matt. xi. 28); from torturing fears (Ps. xxxiv. 4); from inward defilement (John xv. 2; 1 Cor. i. 9). (2.) Glorious rest in heaven: from all temptation (Job iii. 17), suffering (Rev. xxi. 4), danger (Matt. vi. 20). Rest for your *souls;* the consciousness of enjoyment in this life (Rom. viii. 1, 2), and after death (Rev. vii. 14, 17). "Rest" *such as souls require:* eternal (Ps. xvi. 11).

2. *Its certainty.* "Ye *shall* find." Seek it as God requires you, and it is certain. (1.) From His all-sufficiency (Gen. xiv. 22); His kindness (Isa. xlv. 19); His truth (1 Thess. v. 24).

Application: Falsehood of some objections to a course of piety—

1. "*That this strict religion is a new way.*" Nay; sin is Satan's novelty. 2. "*That it is an injurious way; unfavourable to the interests of men.*" Rather, the good way, most beneficial (1 Tim. iv. 8). 3. "*That it is a melancholy way.*" No; peace through life (Luke i. 78, 79), peace in death (Ps. xxxvii. 37), and rest for ever (Rev. xiv. 13).—"*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*"

Theme: RESOLUTE SPIRITUAL INACTION. "Walk therein; but they said, We will not walk therein."

It is more than an invitation from God; an imperative demand.

I. The summons to spiritual exertion. Ruin may ensue from mere sloth: "*neglect* of salvation." Need not be active resistance, only inactive indifference. "Therefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead," &c. We are called to exertion—

1. To discover the right. 2. To gain the good. 3. To find the sacred rest.

Indolence is *disastrous in itself and issues, offensive to God, and prohibited* alike by the Gospel of Christ and the cravings of our soul.

II. The necessity of personal effort. Never yet did a soul glide passively and insensibly into salvation, "from death unto life." 1. *An erroneous and wandering life is one of activity.* "We have turned every one to his own way." 2. *Our spiritual return demands both our volition and endeavour:* repentance and reformation must be done by us, cannot be done for us. 3. *No force from without ourselves will set us right.* God commands, persuades, and calls; Christ invites and pleads; the Spirit strives; but no power *forces.* We must "walk." Active, earnest concurrence.

III. The defiance of godless inaction. "We will not walk!" 1. *No disposition to leave the evil:* prefer wrong ways. 2. *No effort to find the good way:* "Men love darkness rather than light;" "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." 3. *No appreciation of the*

offered rest: enjoy rioting and pleasures of sin. 4. *No apprehension of the awful issues:* eternal unrest of soul. "No peace to wicked," "tribulation and anguish," &c. (Rom. ii. 9). "It is high time to awake out of sleep." "*Strive to enter in* at the straight gate." "*Let us labour* therefore to *enter into* that rest" (Heb. iv. 11). (See Addenda to chap. vi. 16, "*Rest for your souls.*")

Ver. 17. *Theme:* RECKLESS INATTENTION TO WARNING.

"Watchmen," used of sentinels (1 Sam. xiv. 16), but metaphorically of prophets (Isa. lii. 8; Ezek. iii. 17; Hab. ii. 1). "Sound of trumpet" was the signal for flight (see ver. 1; *cf.* Amos iii. 6).

I. Approaching calamity (ver 19).

1. *Merited.* 2. *Devastating.* 3. *Long-delayed.* 4. *Unrecognised.* 5. *Imminent.* Compare the nearing invasion by Babylonish foes to the subtle yet terrible spiritual disasters approaching the sinner.

II. Reiterated forewarnings. Not one watchman, but many, through the successive years of Judah's (*and our*) decline. 1. *God's reluctance.* 2. *Man's opportunities.* 3. *None left unwarned.* 4. *All called to escape.*

III. Rousing alarms. "Sound of trumpet." The case is too urgent for gentle means, the peril too appalling! 1. *Clearly heard by all.* 2. *Easy to understand.* 3. *Startling calls from God.* 4. *Offers of propitious interval.* Escape possible, if men will but listen and hide.

IV. Deliberate inattention. "We will not hearken. 1. *Incredulity:* "Surely a false alarm." 2. *Insensibility:* "We have nothing to fear; deserve no judgments." 3. *Wilful delusion:* "Have no desire or intention to be disturbed in our sins." 4. *Ruinous infatuation:* meanwhile the northern foe speeds towards his unsuspecting prey (ver. 22). So likewise do *death* and *doom* hasten to the Christless: and "how shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?"

Ver. 18. *Comments.*

"*Hear, ye nations.*" As the Jewish Church refuses to hear God's voice speaking by the prophets, He now summons the Gentiles to witness its condemnation.—*Speaker's Com.*

"*And know, O congregation,*" *i.e.*, the few godly souls in the midst of apostate Judah forming the "congregation of My people;" or else the statesmen and counsellors of surrounding nations, who are called to observe in Judah's overthrow that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

"*What is among them,*" *i.e.*, what *deeds* are committed *by* Judah, and what *punishments* (righteous and inevitable) are to be inflicted upon them.

Ver. 18–21. *Theme:* THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

i. They do not shun publicity, but rather appeal to the moral sense of the whole world. ii. They bring upon men their merited recompense. iii. They can be averted, not by outward worship, but by honest submission to God's Word (ver. 19, 20).—*Lange.*

Ver. 19. *Comments.*

"*Hear, O earth.*" A decree so solemnly proclaimed can be of no light importance; and, therefore, the Fathers, not without reason, understood it of the *rejection of the Jews from being the Church.*—*Speaker's Com.*

God appeals to the whole world as to the equity of His proceedings. Observe what is doing among those of Judah and Jerusalem; you hear of the desolations brought upon them; the earth rings with it, trembles under it; you all wonder that I should "bring evil upon this people" that are in covenant with Me, profess relation to Me, have worshipped Me, and been highly favoured by Me. "Know," then:

i. *That it is the natural product of their devices.* The "evil" is "the fruit of their thoughts." They thought to strengthen themselves by alliance with foreigners, and by these forbiden alliances shall they be overthrown.

ii. *That it is the just punishment of their disobedience and rebellion:* "because they have not hearkened," &c. They would never have been *ruined* thus by the judgments of God's hand if they had not refused to be *ruled* by the judgments of His mouth.—*M. Henry.*

Ver. 20. *Theme:* SUBSTITUTES FOR PIETY REPUDIATED.

The text reads literally, "To what purpose is this to me that incense cometh from Sheba," &c. God wanted what was *nearer home*, their faithful allegiance and their heart's love; and what was of *greater value*, "truth in the inward parts."

Note that God repudiated this *ritual homage* at a time when Josiah was engaged on temple restoration; thus emphatically refusing the most elaborate and devoutly arranged ceremonialism as a substitute for personal holiness and practical piety.

I. The resources of religious insincerity. "Incense from Sheba; sweet cane from a far country."

1. *Costly substitutes.* 2. *Foreign importations.* 3. *Fragrant offerings.* So the modern innovations in Christian sanctuaries: *ritualism* is *costly*, *foreign* in its origin, and not a little *fragrance* mingles with its sensational services. So the *theological vagaries* of our age, theories which *cost* the sacrifice of precious truths, *foreign* speculations which intrude upon the simple Word of God, *fragrant* to many who have lost all enjoyment of the "things of Christ." Men take great trouble to substitute the true.

II. The performance of superficial worship.

1. *The outward forms of religion may be continued where inward homage has perished:* "burnt-offerings and sacrifices." 2. *Externals are frequently multiplied as an extenuation of conscious inward defalcations.* 3. *Outward homage is proper and pleasing to God as an expression of heart allegiance:* "show faith by works." 4. *Mere external piety is a solemn mockery and a hollow pretence:* their altar offerings and personal sacrifices were both a "lie unto God."

III. The rejection of heartless piety. "Not acceptable, nor sweet unto Me." Sacrifice and incense were asked by God as suggestive of *repentance*, and an incentive to their *faith in a Mediator*; but they became an abomination and outrage when used to *cover* and *excuse* sin. 1. "*Acceptable*" *offerings necessitate truth in the offerer.* "To obey is better than sacrifice." 2. *Sacrifices are only* "*sweet*" as they *express the heart's true love of God.* "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit," &c. He prizes the oblations of contrition, affection, and faith; these are "in the sight of God of great price." Let all our sacrifices bear to God "*the sweet savour of Christ*," being offered in dependence on His merits and mediation; for "with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Ver. 21. *Comments.*

"*Stumbling-blocks.*" The Babylonian invaders (so Keil, Hend.), who would be instruments of Judah's utter overthrow, eventuating in indiscriminate ruin. But another meaning may be given: The Jews having established themselves in courses of *insincerity towards God*, would sink into such general habits of *insincerity among themselves* (for the step is natural from falsity with God to falsity one with another), as to lead to utter social hypocrisy, anarchy, recrimination, antagonism, ruin. Every tie of *family* and *friendship severed* by the prevailing deceitfulness which *wrecked all honour* and *alienated all affection.* This is indeed but the fulfilment of a natural and moral law; the ultimate overthrow of deceivers, taken in their own nets; Haman hanged on the gallows he made for Mordecai.

"*I* will lay stumbling-blocks;" for it is *God's punitive law* which works this infliction on the sinner of his own sin. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Ver. 22–26. See *Homily on section, supra.*

1. *How furious the foe* (ver. 22, 23). 2. *How terrifying their attitude* (ver. 23). "Set in array," &c. 3. *How indefensible and weak the assailed.* "Against *thee*, O *daughter* of Zion." "Hide me, O my Saviour, hide!" 4. *How paralysed with apprehension* (ver. 24). 5. *How encompassed by the merciless adversary* (ver. 25). To "flee" (ver. 1) is *now impossible.* What a literal foreshadowing and exposition is here of events at the "day of the Lord"! (comp. 1 Thess. v. 2, 3). "Then *sudden destruction* cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and *they shall not escape.*"

Ver. 26. *Theme*; A WOFUL SPECTACLE OF RUIN.

On the coming disasters the prophet's eye now gazed; he foresaw it in all its vivid details, and from his pallid lips rose a wail of consternation, a cry of anguish over Zion.

I. A sight for patriotic anguish. "O daughter of my people!" He loved his nation, felt her woes, pitied her very weakness, lamented the dreadful spoliation at hand; yet *could not interpose or save.* How distressing this helpless pity! A father watches his dearest daughter agonise and die; but can do nothing—only writhe and weep. A patriot sees his nation wounded, wronged; yet is powerless to rescue or avenge. A pastor beholds the tender ones of his flock fall a prey to the despoiler; cannot deliver, only deplore. But Jesus *saw* humanity perishing; with infinite pity He *sorrowed*, and with infinite power He *saved.*

II. Judah abandoned to misery. "Gird with sackcloth, and wallow in ashes." Yet this was not *repentant* anguish; for she still loved the sins which wrought her woe. Nor was it *remedial* anguish; for now rescue and redemption were for ever gone; her day of hope had passed. "The spoiler *is come!*" 1. It was *permanent* abandonment to misery. "*Gird* thee with sackcloth;" not merely clothe thee with it as if for a day only, but *fasten* it to thee as thine unchangeable attire; for the woe will not be transient.

2. It was *extreme* abandonment. "Wallow thyself in ashes." To cast ashes upon the head showed deep grief; to sit down in ashes, yet deeper distress; but to "wallow" in them expresses *unbearable* anguish and intense self-*abhorrence.* Oh, how dreadful this condition for the tender and "delicate daughter of Zion"! (ver. 2); how fearful the degradation and misery with which a *sinful career* closes!

III. The woful grief of despair. "Make thee mourning, as for an only son; most bitter lamentation." Lit. "a lamentation of *bitternesses*" (plural): suggesting the *many and aggravated* occasions for her grief. 1. For *her wilful career of rebellion against her patient God.* 2. For *the depths and intensity of her iniquities.* 3. For *the repudiation of her many opportunities of escape.* 4. For *the shameful and excruciating ruin into which she has fallen.* 5. For *the utter loss of all her honour and happiness.* 6. For *the dishonours which her conduct and ruin cast upon Jehovah's name.* 7. For the *most bitter thought that hope and redemption were finally and irretrievably forfeited.* "Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke xix. 41–44).

IV. Merciless spoliation of the foe. "The spoiler shall suddenly come upon thee." Contrast Zion—"the perfection of beauty" *before* Nebuchadnezzar laid hand upon her; and the wild waste—blackened with fire, temple and walls demolished, and all her people carried away—to which she was reduced. How rightly called "*the spoiler*"! Contrast man—"in image of God," redeemed by Jesus, visited by the Holy Spirit; with what he becomes when "earthly, sensual, devilish;" and when the soul is finally surrendered to the arch-spoiler's ruin.

Is there *no hope?* None was left for Judah; but for us it is written, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Ver. 27. *Comments.*

"*I have set thee for a tower;*" rather for a *prover* or *refiner* of metals. (Comp. ix. 7.) "I will melt them and try them" (same verb). The prophet was set by God to be a touchstone to try the people, and prove what manner of spirit they were of. If they received his word, they were sterling ore; if not, they were reprobate silver, mere dross. In a larger sense, the Written Word, and also the Incarnate Word, are set for the trial of the world, "that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."—*Wordsworth.*

"The power dwells in Christ's word generally to compel men to separation and decision; for no one can remain neutral towards Him long. He makes manifest the real condition of the heart."—*Naeg*

Ver. 28. This gives the *issue of the testing;* the moral character of the people is hopelessly, irremediably bad; Jeremiah's ministry had made that evident; they were like *brass and iron*, base and obdurate.

Ver. 29. "*Bellows*," the prophets: "*are burned*," consumed, worn out by continual blowing. Prophecy has exhausted all its fervour upon Judah. Jeremiah's heart, consumed by the intensity and heat of divine inspiration, can labour no longer.

"As the bellows of the refiner are burnt in the midst of the fire, so the voice of the prophet is silenced which said, Turn ye to My law! And as the lead which melts in the fire, so the words of the prophets who prophesy to them are made of none effect, and the people are not profited by the teaching of their preacher, and do not repent of their sins."—*Targum.*

"*The lead is consumed of the fire.*" Anciently, instead of quicksilver, lead was used for the liquefaction of silver, so as to separate the base ingredients from the precious metal. "When goldsmiths wish to purify the silver, they add lead to it. When preachers would try their hearers, they must apply the law. The fire is God's Word (Jer. xxiii. 29); the bellows, the Holy Spirit in the mouth of the teacher; the metal, the hearers."—*Cramer.*

"*The wicked are not plucked away.*" "The *bad* are not separated," *i.e.*, the base ingredients, the bad principles and habits which prevail so much, and adhere so closely, that all the endeavours and pains of the refiner prove ineffectual, so that nothing remains but to throw them aside as a metal disallowed and *cried down* (ver. 30) by authority, as counterfeiting silver, but not capable of being brought to the sterling standard.—*Dr. Blayney.* (See Addenda to chap. vi. 27–30.)

i. God's dealings and messages are *designed to separate sinners from their sins.* ii. He *uses all means to qualify sinners for salvation* ere He consigns them to destruction. iii. God *proclaims them "reprobate" and "castaway" upon whom the energies of His grace are spent in vain.*

Ver. 29. *Theme*: THE BELLOWS BURNED.

Prophets spoke in parables to excite attention, to illuminate a doctrine, to fix truth on the memory. "The bellows are burned." Words apply:

I. **To the prophet himself.** He complains that he spake with such pathos, energy, force of heart, that he exhausted himself without being able to melt the people's hearts; so hard was the ore that the bellows were burned before the metal was melted; *the prophet was exhausted before the people were impressed.* So also with *Noah, Isaiah, John the Baptist*, Jesus Himself, though "never man spake like that Man." Nor since, by apostles, confessors, zeal-consuming preachers has the iron-hearted world become melted; but they themselves have suffered and perished amid their work. "Bellows *burned.*"

1. It is the preacher's business to continue labouring till he is worn out. 2. The Gospel he preaches is the infallible test between the precious and the vile.

II. **To the afflictions which God sends upon ungodly men.** Sent to see if they will melt in the furnace or not. But where there is no grace in affliction *the afflictions are sooner exhausted than the sinner's heart is made to melt* under the heat caused thereby—*e.g.*, *Pharaoh*, not softened by all the plagues. *Ahaz*, "when he was afflicted, he sinned yet more and more." *Jerusalem*, often chastised, yet incorrigible. *Sinners*, upon whom God's judgments exert no melting power.

III. **To the chastisements which God sends upon His own people.** The Great Refiner will have His gold pure, and will utterly remove our tin. There are unloving children, who will even rebel till they draw down blows upon themselves. Do not let it be said that the *bellows are used till they are worn out* before our afflictions melt us to repentance and cause us to let go our sins.

IV. The time is coming when **the excitement of ungodly men** *will fail them.* Many activities are kept up by outward energies inciting men. 1. *Excitement in pursuit of wealth.* Yet

how little will the joys of wealth stimulate you in your last moments! 2. Excitement in *pursuing fame*. Alas! men burn away their lives for the approbation of fellow-creatures; and these fires will die down into darkness. 3. *Living for pleasure;* but satiety follows, and the flame of joy goes out. 4. *Hypocrisy* is with some their "bellows;" but this feigned zeal and pretended piety will end in black despair.

V. To those excitements which keep alive the Christian's zeal. In certain Churches we have seen great blazings of enthusiasm, misnamed "revivals," mere agitations. Genuine revivals I love; but these spurious things are fanaticism. Why was it the fire soon went out? The man who blew the bellows left the scene of excitement, and darkness ensued. Our earnestness is worthless which depends on such special ministrations. *Is the fire in our soul burning less vehemently than in years past?* Our obligations to live for Christ are the same; our Master's claims on our love are as strong; the objects for which we served God in the past are as important. Should we grow less heavenly the nearer we come to the New Jerusalem? Of the *true excitements* of a Christian's zeal it can never be said "the bellows are burned;" but if zeal is flagging, some other motive than a heavenly must have acted at the first. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith;" if not, no wonder your piety declines.

"Let every flying hour confess
We bring Thy Gospel fresh renown;
And when our lives and labours cease
May we possess the promised crown."

—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER VI.

Topic: Difficulties of Old Age without Religion. *Text: "Woe unto us! for the day goeth away; for the shadows of the evening are stretched out"* (ver. 4).

A painful subject, but one to which it is necessary to call the attention of procrastinating man: the difficulties and sorrows of old age without a vital union with Christ and the comforts of His love.

I. *That period of life* during which the Saviour grants to men the privileges of the Gospel is known under the appellation of a day of grace; *a day in which He waits for the sinner's repentance, and is peculiarly ready to aid his efforts.*

The great object to attain during continuance of this "day" is reconciliation to God. They who "seek Him early" are promised they "shall find Him." If man be wise in the morning of that day of privilege, the way of return to God is filled with encouragement. In *old age* this reconciliation is rendered painful and embarrassing by this difficulty, "*The day goeth away.*" Period of grace almost come to a close. The aged sinner must necessarily reflect on *long duration of mercy* passed *unimproved.* Every privilege of the Gospel brought individual *responsibility;* render account therefor to holy God.

"Day goeth away:" it has *been enjoyed* in the fulness of its privileges; but since unimproved, tended only to *increase the guilt and danger of the soul.* For fifty years the Redeemer has called you, angels of mercy have watched for conversion, Divine Providence crowned your way with loving-kindness and tender mercy. How *hard and difficult now to arouse your soul;* or, if aroused, how difficult to *combat your fears* of being too late, of hope being lost through long delay!

II. *Second difficulty to prevent the return of the aged sinner to Christ is,* the short period of grace now left to him. "The shadows of evening are stretched out."

Many wasted years gone; *very few now remain* for the soul's salvation. As life passes away, the *work* to be done *increases,* yet time is diminished. Death now stands *at the door.* Aged sinner is *tempted to despair* of escaping the ruin so close upon him. Satan uses this difficulty which his own heart presents, and allures him to quiet himself under the load of his sins: there is now no opportunity for any slow work of grace.

III. *Third difficulty in the way of aged sinners arises from the* increased hardness of their hearts.

When young, conviction agitated their minds: solemn proclamation of Divine truth awoke attention; their eyes could weep under gospel preaching; affections could be attracted by hopes and promises; often felt excited towards a life of holiness and peace. *Now, no such feelings.* Unmoved. This hardness of heart, the necessary accompaniment of age, and of a long continuance in an unconverted state, forms a serious difficulty to returning to God.

IV. Fourth difficulty, as hedging up the aged sinner's return, is the pride of character *which attends the advanced periods of life.*

Heart may be moved, conscience awakened, desire roused to lay down burden and find peace; but an *assumed dignity and coldness of manner*, are drawn over a broken and bleeding spirit, because the *acknowledgment would be humiliating* to the age and station of the individual. Yet soul must humble himself, if find rest. Age furnishes no exception; rather requires deeper abasement. This *acknowledgment* of sin and misery, to children, domestics, and friends—confession *that all these years he has been wrong*, is painful and repulsive.

Your time is short, difficulties are many. Yet "nothing impossible with God." Immediately turn to Christ. Flee for refuge!—*Rev. Stephen H. Tyng, Philadelphia.*

Topic: THE GOOD WAY. *Children's Sermon. Text:* "*Ask for the good way*" (ver. 16).

A dream of children who went through gate, regardless of placard warning of danger, because bright and smiling flowers grew among the tall grass. Went on picking them; merry voices rang with glee; unconsciously went further into the tangled wood, lost all knowledge of way out, and terrified to find among the thick grass loathsome and poisonous snakes; hurrying from them they slipped down over hidden rocks into deep stagnant water, and lost. "Turn ye from evil ways, for *why will ye die?*" (See Isa. xxx. 31.) Keep in "the old paths," where taught to tread, though others invite.

I. Wrong ways are not so happy as they promise to be

We do not deny that ways look inviting and "seem right," even promise to prove "good," but are evil and "end in death." "*Pleasures* of sin," although "*wages* of sin is death." Very inviting, or not so many go. Excursion train dashed off gaily; but line insecure, and dreadful disaster ensued: *would so many have gone had they known* the way was dangerous? If you leave "old paths" because you think new ways not disastrous and more enjoyable.

1. *Inviting ways do not always prove "good."* Do not judge that to be best which *looks* most attractive. Flowers not sweetest which are gayest. Nor fruit. You find out the delusion by trying them. Yes; you say, "*We should like to try for ourselves* the different ways, even those forbidden!" Rather prove for yourselves than take the word of others. But on a bottle at home is a label "*Poison:*" will you take the word of others, or *try for yourselves?* On rocks a *lighthouse*, warning ships of ruin: will any captain be so rash as try for himself, and steer ship to death? (Prov. xiv. 12.) *Scenes of amusement, self-indulgences, courses of irreligion, neglect of sanctuary and prayer:* these invite you from "old paths;" but remember the degradation and misery of the prodigal son!

2. *Your own way is not always happiest or best* (Prov. xiii. 15). We all like to have "our own way." Many of us did for years, but heard Voice of Mercy call "Repent!" Remember that *having their own way* is just what *the world of sinners is doing!* (Isa. liii. 6.) As silly sheep. Will you do as the doomed world? Why, all home and Sabbath teaching is to warn you from that! (Comp. text with ver. 7.) By doing this you "*grieve the Spirit,*" *set yourself against Christ*, allow yourself *to be led captive by devil*, and *court doom.* In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian got out of

"Slough," but, instead of going to "Wicket Gate," turned aside and wandered into terrors and troubles. But "Evangelist" met him, and put him in right way again. Who is Evangelist? Read Bible; obey text; hear Jesus, "I am the Way!" "Follow Me!"

II. The good way is happier far than it looks.

False thought that Christian life means sadness, "all joy darkened." Yet true that Jesus says, "Take up *cross* and come after Me."

1. *Why is not the Christian way all easy?* Bird teaching young to fly, how distressed the young seem! She might have spared them. Would it have been kindest? No; better they should *learn to soar*, though not easy. So child learns to walk; youth to breast the stream; boy brave the ordeals and trials of school. Nobler men. Boy with every fancy gratified, no hardships or self-denials, becomes selfish, self-willed, ruined. Crosses are rugged blessings.

2. *Though not so attractive* as other paths, *the Christian way is really best.* Two heaps of coins: new bright copper, old dull gold: yet the gold, though smaller and duller, the best.

3. *The Christian way brings rest to those who tread it.* Walking through open country, became lost amid different paths; worried and wearied; at length *right*, and soon at "rest;" for knew it was the *one right way*, and *led safe home.* Not wait till home (heaven) before have "rest." Peace within *now* (Prov. xii. 28).

Think how many have gone that "good way" to heaven! B.C. 612 Jeremiah called it "old." Now nearly A.D. 1900. Yet millions tread therein (Matt. vii. 13, 14). Take your place with the Christian followers. "Ways of pleasantness and paths all peace."

Topic: THE ANCIENT PATHS. *Text:* "*Ask for the old paths*" (ver. 16).

In Palestine paths are the only thoroughfares; through indolence or selfishness even these became obliterated; then men who went from tribe to tribe were obliged to thread their way through thickets and over rocks in the most inconvenient way. Transition is easy from an outward physical path to a moral meaning: roads men walk with their feet suggest the road men's thoughts habitually walk in, the path in which their feelings are accustomed to move, the way in which their conduct naturally flows.

In this secondary sense use text to point out the *necessity*, in *all who would go right*, of *keeping upon the old ways*, the ascertained ways, which, in the experience of mankind, have been proved beneficial. We are not to hold on to anything as if it were the perfect form of thought, or the final form of principle; but we are to hold on to all those things which long and ripe experience had shown to be beneficial until something more beneficial can be put in their place.

I. Our boast of novelty, our glorying in our newness, as if we were in advance of everybody and everything else, *is a fanciful mistake.* Our thoughts, and all the channels of our thoughts, are *the result* of the thought and experience of thousands of years that are gone by. Political habits and customs, knowledge of right and equity—these have been gradually unfolded through ages past. *Combinations are new, elements are old.* We did not first dig up the precious gold, nor first unlock the secrets of philosophy. Yet we congratulate ourselves that we do not belong to the old, slowly-moving ages; are proud of our progressiveness, and it is fashionable to make it a matter of boasting.

II. The present time is noticeable for an extraordinary outbreak of activity along new lines of thought and belief. Historic researches, disclosures of truths of the past, scientific discoveries and prophecies, have set imagination on fire; and men feel as though old things were passing away, and all becoming new. The consequences are

(*a.*) Men are inclined *to doubt generally the social and moral results of past*

experience, to repudiate long accepted social maxims and customs. (*b.*) *General distrust is being thrown upon religious teachings:* not positive unbelief, but uncertainty. And by shaking confidence in religion its real power is destroyed. Thus thousands are abandoning old paths—old thoughts, usages, customs, habits, convictions, virtues. Tendency developed in this direction in art and literature. Leading men in history and science are tending away from the old grounds of Christianity. This is a fact of profound importance, and should command the attention of those who believe Christianity to be of God.

III. Consider that there are certain great permanencies of thought, character, and custom, especially necessary in our time. *Note:* (*a.*) That *moral and social progress can never be so rapid as physical developments.* Men cannot be changed in their principles, feelings, and inner life in the same ratio as external changes go on. Progress is always fastest in the lowest stages. You can teach men to accomplish great physical results, as in steam, telegraphy, &c.; but if you go higher and teach them to be more just, merciful, and pure, the process is slower. There is no proportion between the rapidity with which we develop in physical things and the rapidity with which we develop in that part of our manhood which is highest and divinest. (*b.*) *There is danger in giving up any belief or custom which has been entwined in our moral sense.* Regard as sacred the first principles of truth. What would be thought of a man who considered it necessary to perfection in literature that he should despise the alphabet? It was as necessary to Isaac Newton when he was fifty as when he was five years of age. It goes on with a man all his life long. It is not safe to remove even the imperfect things of man's earlier life until they are superseded by something higher. Better the Parsee should worship light than by astronomical proofs to destroy his delusions, and so leave him with no God. So with heathenism; with those who slavishly bow their souls to authority of the Church; with votaries of Romish error,—it is not safe to take away a man's view because it is inaccurate, unless you give him a more accurate view. You thereby destroy his faith, however faulty, and thus have destroyed the life that was in him, and left him a desert. (*c.*) *In the transition* from a lower *to a higher form of belief there is peril.* Dangerous to pass from one religion espoused in youth, to another espoused in manhood. Many have sailed out of the harbour of Popery, and been wrecked ere they reached the harbour of Protestantism. Thousands have deserted the orthodoxy in which early taught, and never got into any other religion at all. Hence, we are not to think it our duty in a headlong way to change men's belief simply because they are erroneous. As if changing from one mode of belief to another was going to change the conscience, reason, moral susceptibility, and character.

IV. The relinquishment of trust or of practice should always be from worse to better. If a man has a poor way of looking at religion, care less to convince him of his poverty than quietly to convince him of a better way. If you want a traveller to have a better road, make that better road, and then he will need no argument to persuade him to walk in it. If you are teaching that one intellectual system is better than another, and that one religious organisation, church, or creed, is better, prove it by presenting better fruit than the other, and men will need little argument beyond. The first proof that a man holds a better system of religion than his neighbour, should be in himself: the life will be the evidence. If a Church breeds meekness, fortitude, love, courage, disinterestedness; if it makes noble men—uncrowned but undoubted princes—then it is a Church, a living epistle which will convince men. What we want is not change, except for betterment.

V. All new truths, like new wines, must have a period of fermentation. Daring leaders in science—I believe them to be men who are throwing out ore which, when it is smelted and purified, is to be precious indeed. Germs of truth are in their moral teaching. But, shall men abandon old beliefs, and take these germs of truth that lie in the heavens like mere nebulous clouds?

(*a.*) *All truths are at first on probation;* must be scrutinised, persecuted, ransacked, vindicated. We are not wise if we follow these new lights before knowing what they are, their extent and practical application.

(*b.*) *Guard against wild and unreasonable urgency in throwing off traditional faiths and truths, for those you can discover for yourselves.* Accept what other men construct for you. This is a factor in civilisation. Yet when men come to questions of religious belief they deem it unmanly that others should think for them! We are so related, by the laws of God, one to another, that no man can think out everything for himself. Is it then wiser to plunge into the realm of nothingness or the unknown, to give up your belief at once when its validity is questioned? or is it not wiser to hold on to the faith of your father and mother till you can see something better still? It is wiser for man to abide by the truths and laws of God till better ones can be substituted.

VI. We do well to look cautiously at new truths and those who advocate them. There is a tendency to praise scientific men as though they were the only persons who applied themselves to find out *facts*. But remember scientific men are no better than other men; no more likely to be right in spirit, just as likely to be vain and arrogant. They are all human; are to be absolute authorities for nobody. There is a conceit, a dogmatism, a bigotry of science, as really as there is of religion. Application:

1. That *all the tendencies which narrow the moral sense and enlarge the liberty of the passions are dangerous.* 2. *All tendencies which increase self-conceit* are to be suspected and disowned. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." 3. *Those tendencies which extinguish in a man all spiritual elements,* such as arise from faith in God, in our spirituality and immortality, must inevitably degrade our manhood. No heroism ever grows out of abnegation of these great truths. 4. *All tendencies which take away your hope of and belief in another world,* take away your motive for striving to reach a higher life. Without this hope men will have a weary pilgrimage in a world of unbelief.

Make better paths if you will, but abandon not the old: and least of all abandon that one which leads straight to Jerusalem. For along that way the ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs unto Zion.—*H. Ward Beecher.*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER VI. ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. "*Set up a sign of fire.*" Fire signs are used as a telegraph in some parts of the South Seas. A native at Tanna, in giving me the news one morning, said, "There will be a party over from the island of Aneiteum to-day or to-morrow." "How do you know?" "Because we saw a great bonfire rising there last night." The natives of heathen islands are also in the habit of kindling fires as a *smoke signal* to attract the notice of a vessel which may be off their shore. Sometimes, when we are wondering whether there are any natives among the dense bush which we see from the ship, up goes a column of smoke and removes all doubt."—*Turner's "Polynesia."*

Ver. 4. "*Woe unto us, for the day goeth away.*"

Propitious opportunities lost. "Opportunities are the golden spots of time, like the pearl in the oyster-shell, of much more value than the shell that contains it. There is much time in a short opportunity."—*Flavel.*

The proverb, "Take time by the forelock," had its origin in the old pictures of Father Time, who appeared as bald-headed, excepting a lock of hair upon his forehead. Our fathers were accustomed to bury an hour-glass with the dead, as a symbol of time and opportunity utterly past away.—*J. G. Pilkington.*

Grotius, the laborious scholar, had for his motto, "*Hora ruit.*" *Seneca* taught that time was the only thing of which it is a virtue to be covetous.

"In the city of Basle, Switzerland, it

was the custom to have all the clocks of the city an hour a-head of time, for the following reason: Once an enemy was moving upon the city, and their stratagem was to take the city at 12 o'clock; but the cathedral clock, by mistake, struck 1 instead of 12, and so the enemy thought that they were too late to carry out the stratagem, and gave up the assault, and the city was saved."—*Talmage.*

Ver. 6. "*Hew ye down trees.*" The importance of preserving fruit-bearing trees from destruction in sieges [cf. Deut. xx. 19, 20] is evident, when we remember how much larger a proportion of man's subsistence than in our climates is, in the East, derived from fruit-bearing trees. Among the Syro-Arabian nations, their destruction is regarded as a sacrilege. It is related that in one of his wars, Mohammed cut down the date-trees of the Ben Nadi (a tribe of Jews in Arabia); and, in order to justify this act to his own indignant followers, he had to produce a pretended revelation sanctioning the deed: "This revelation came down: What palm-trees ye cut down, or left standing on their roots, were so cut down or left by the will of God, that He might disgrace the evil-doers." Plutarch says that similar regulations restrained the Egyptians from destroying fruit-trees. Other nations were less scrupulous, as among them the Assyrians (and, doubtless, the Babylonians also); for, in at least one instance, we have noticed a palm-tree being cut down outside a besieged city. Josephus expressly records the destruction of trees by the Romans. So completely has this prophecy been fulfilled, that the neighbourhood of Jerusalem has become entirely divested of trees in the course of the successive sieges to which the city has been exposed. When the Crusaders under Godfrey commenced their siege, no timber could be found for the construction of their engines.—*Kitto.*

Ver. 7. *Continuity of sin.* "If you commit one sin, it is like the melting of the lower glacier upon the Alps, the others must follow in time. Set the coral insect at work, you cannot decree where it shall stay its work. It will not build its rock just as high as you please, it will not stay until an island be created."—*Spurgeon.*

Ver. 8. "*Lest my soul depart from thee.*"

God's withdrawment from man. "Think of God sending a famine upon the soul, of minds pining and dying because Divine messages have been withdrawn! We know what the effect would be if God were to withdraw the dew, or to trouble the air with a plague, or to avert the beams of the sun; the garden would be a desert, the fruitful field a sandy plain, the wind a bearer of death, summer a stormy night, and life itself a cruel variation of death: so penetrating, so boundless is the influence of God in nature. Is it conceivable that the withdrawment of God's influence would be less disastrous upon the spirit of man?"—*Joseph Parker.*

Ver. 9. "*Glean Israel as a vine.*" "God has two kinds of vintage: one is in grace, when He plucks His glorious grapes, the fruit of good works, and says, 'Destroy it not, for there is a blessing with it' (Isa. lxv. 8). But where He finds only poisonous berries (Isa. v. 2), He employs other vintagers with iron gloves, and presses them out in His anger (Rev. xiv. 20), till neither stem nor stalk is left."—*Cramer.*

Ver. 10. "*God's Word: no delight in it.*" A wealthy gentleman invited his servants, on a festive occasion, into his house to receive presents. "'What will you have?' said he, addressing the groom, 'this Bible, or a twenty-dollar note?' 'I would take the Bible, sir, but I cannot read; so I think the money will do me more good.' 'And you?' he asked the gardener. 'There is illness at home, sir, and I sadly want the money.' 'You can read,' said the old man, turning to the cook, 'will you have this Bible?' 'I can read,' was her reply, 'but I never have time to look into a book, and I need fresh garments most.' Last came the errand-boy. 'My lad,' said his kind benefactor, 'will you take these twenty dollars, for you surely want new clothes, or would you like the Bible?' 'Thank

you, sir, my mother has taught me that the law of the Lord is better than thousands of gold and silver, I will have the good book, if you please." As the boy received the Bible and unclasped its covers, a bright gold piece rolled on the floor. Quickly turning its pages, he found them interleaved with bank notes, while his fellow-servants, discovering the mistake of their worldly covetousness, hastily departed in chagrin.—*Dictionary of Illustrations.*

Ver. 11. "*A classification of society.*" "Children, young men," &c. Five stages of human life are successively marked out. The *children*, with no higher object in life than a game of play *in the streets* (Zech. viii. 5). The *youths*, in what in modern phrase we should call their *clubs*, for such is the meaning of the word rendered "assembly," whether they meet there for friendly converse (Ps. lxxxix. 7), for merriment (Jer. xv. 17), or for that love of secret combination so natural at their age (Prov. xv. 22, cf. Ps. lv. 14). Next comes *middle age*, represented by the "husband with his wife." Then the *elder*, the man who has grown-up children (here called "the aged"), but is strong and vigorous. Lastly, the *man whose "days are full,"* whose work is done, and who has but one thing left—to die.—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 13. "*Every one given to covetousness.*" As the dog in Æsop's fable lost the real flesh for the shadow of it, so the covetous man casts away the true riches for the love of the shadowy.—*Adams.*

Ver. 14. "*Peace, where there is no peace.*" It is a lamentable fact that, without any hireling shepherd to cry "Peace," men will cry that for themselves. They need not the syren song to entice them to the rocks of presumption and rash confidence. There is a tendency in their own hearts to put sweet for bitter,—to think well of their evil estate and foster themselves in proud conceit. Let men alone, let no deluder seek to deceive them, hush for ever every false and tempting voice, they will themselves, impelled by their own pride, run to an evil conceit, and make themselves at ease, though God Himself is in arms against them. To be tormented on account of sin is the path to peace, and happy shall I be if I can hurl a firebrand into your hearts.—*Spurgeon.*

Ver. 16. "*Old path: good way.*" The case assumed is that of a traveller, who, on his journey, finds himself at the opening of many ways, and knows not with any assurance which of them leads by the safest and most direct road to his resting-place. He seeks a most ancient city, the way to which men have traversed in all ages. That fresh footpath, through the flowery meadows—that bridle-path round by the marshes—this fresh cutting through the hills,—these will not do for him: he must ask for the *old* path. But there may be more old paths than one. The broad and pleasant way that leadeth to destruction is as old as the straight road that leadeth unto life, and far better frequented. It is, therefore, necessary to seek not only "the old path," but the good way." Although every old way may not be good, the good way is certainly old; if, therefore, the traveller finds and follows the way that is both old and good, he is safe—he shall without fail reach his home at last, and "find rest for his soul."—*Kitto.*

Ver. 16. "*Rest for your souls.*" St. Augustine, after having given himself to every form of pleasure and gratification which the world provided, was at length brought to repose in the faith, and began his "Confessions" with the words, "Thou, O Lord, hast created us for Thyself, and restless is our heart until it finds rest in Thee." Dryden used to avow himself contented when sitting under the statue of Shakespeare; and Buffon, the naturalist, spoke of the happiness he felt when sitting at the feet of Sir Isaac Newton; but we know Him who invites us to sit at His feet, thus choosing, as Mary did, "the good part," and says, "Learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

Ver. 27–30. The prophet, in the *first figure*, represents himself as a trier of metals, who first takes the rough ore in hand in order mineralogically *to distinguish its constituent parts*. In the *second* figure, the ore is exposed to fire.

in order in that way to *test its metallic value* (ver. 29). In what follows, he makes use of a *third* figure: Israel is here *definitely presented as silver ore;* but in the smelting, it appears that the silver is so mingled with the stone that the production of clear, pure silver is impossible.—*Naeg.*

Ver. 30. "*Reprobate silver.*" This, then, is the end: "The Lord hath rejected them." The smelter is God's prophet, the bellows the breath of inspiration; the flux, his earnestness in preaching. But in vain does the fervour of prophecy essay to melt the hearts of the people. They are so utterly corrupt that no particle even of pure metal can be found in them. All the refiner's art is in vain. They have rejected all God's gifts and motives for their repentance, and, therefore, Jehovah has rejected them as an alloy too utterly adulterate to repay the refiner's toils.—*Speaker's Com.*

CHAPTER VII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES. 1. Chronology of the chapter. *Keil* regards chaps. vii. to x. as later addresses, delivered during Josiah's reign. *Bagster* places an interval of merely two years between chaps. vi. and vii., dating this B.C. 610, two years before Josiah's death. The A. V. places it ten years after Jehoiakim became king. But Dahler, Graf, Naeg., Lange, Hend., and Dr. Payne Smith identify this chapter with chap. xxvi. (*cf.* the corresponding verses, vii. 2, 13, 14, with xxvi. 2, 5, 6 respectively), and, therefore, date chap. vii. "*in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim.*" Yet identity of verses is not itself conclusive of chapters being synchronous, for the book abounds in repetitions of theme and language. Besides (as *Keil* points out) there is no trace in this discourse, chap. vii.–x., of the hostility towards Jeremiah which became so impetuous and implacable in Jehoiakim's days (contrast this address with chap. xxvi. 14, 15, *sq.*). However, this chapter depicts such idolatrous degradations as agree more with the relapse under Jehoiakim than with the reforms of Josiah's reign (see viii. 9, 18, 31).

Jehoiakim came to the throne B.C. 608. Assyrian chronology changes that date to B.C. 589.

2. Cotemporary Scriptures: 2 Kings xxiii. 34–37; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 4, 5; *cf.* Habak. i. Ezekiel lived through the epoch of Josiah's death, the abject dethronisation of Jehoahaz, and Jehoiakim's installation as king; but his prophecies date after the first group of captives had been carried into Babylon.

3. National History. B.C. 605 [Assyrian date, 586]. Josiah had fallen in battle with Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo (2 Kings xxiii. 29, 30). Jehoahaz had reigned three months, and now Jehoiakim was king—Pharaoh Necho having placed him on the throne of Judah as vassal king, and laid the land under tribute to Egypt (2 Kings xxiii. 33, 35). During his wicked and abject reign the nation hastened back to idolatry and vice.

4. Cotemporaneous History. Two years before Josiah's death Nineveh was wrested from Egypt by the combined assault of the Medes (under Cyaxares) and Babylonians (under Nabopolassar)—these two rising empires being intent on crushing the despotism of the Pharaohs. Against this Babylonian usurper Pharaoh Necho marched B.C. 608; and by successful war at Charchemish, recovered a temporary Egyptian ascendancy. This ascendancy terminated finally in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when Nebuchadnezzar led his father's forces against Necho, vanquished Egypt, and inaugurated the Chaldean dominion. *Cf. Critical Notes* on chap. i.

5. Geographical References. Ver. 12. "*Shiloh,*" situate north of Bethel, in tribe of Benjamin (Judges xxi. 19), distinguished as being the first sacred resting-place of the ark, and therefore the centre of the nation's worship. Ark abode there for a period of *cir.* 300 years (Josh. xviii. 1; 1 Sam. iv. 3, 4). Scene of Samuel's call, and Eli's judgeship. Must have been a populous town then; still existed in the reign of Jeroboam I. (1 Kings xiv. 2); but in Jeremiah's time it had sunk to a mean village. Divine displeasure over idolatry led to its degradation from historic eminence. Dr Robinson traced its site in the Arabic Seilûn. Jerome wrote, "At Silo, where once was the tabernacle and ark of the Lord, there can scarcely be pointed out the foundation of an altar." Ver. 31. "*Valley of the Son of Hinnom,*" skirting the western base of Mount Zion, and meeting the valley of Jehoshaphat; a most picturesque scene, with gardens, groves, and cool refreshing shade; regarded as the temple of Palestine. *Jerome* says, "The valley of Hinnom was watered by the springs of Siloam, and was pleasant and well wooded; and at this day delightful gardens are situate there" (*cf. Personal References* below). "*The high places* of Tophet" were artificial mounts on which sacrificial altars were reared, on the heights on the south side of the valley, and facing Mount Zion.

6. Personal References. Ver. 15. "*Ephraim,*" put for Israel, the ten tribes God had "cast out." Their having had the ark so long did not protect them from banishment; nor

would Judah escape, though possessing the Temple (ver. 4). Ver. 18. *Queen of Heaven—i.e.*, the moon. She was revered as a deity by Persians and Syrians. Her name לְבָנָה, was a fem. form of מֶלֶךְ, *Molech*, or מֹלֶךְ, *Melech*. In Babylonia her name was *Molatta*. She was regarded as the wife of Molech or Baal, the *king* of heaven. The sun and moon were worshipped thus as being the generative powers of nature. Ver. 31. "*Tophet*," perhaps a contemptuous name given by Jeremiah to their god, Baal [see *Literary Criticism* on chap. iii. 24]; or else not a proper name at all, the word "Tophet" meaning merely a *thing or place of abhorrence*, and any place where human sacrifices were offered was stigmatised as a Tophet, or place of horror (See Addenda to chap. v. 31, "*High Places of Tophet*"). Ver 31. "*Son of Hinnom*," a name without traceable personal identification. Mentioned in connection with the "valley" so early as in Josh. xv. 8. Possibly he was some ancient or fabulous hero. The valley called *Vale Ben-Hinnom* in the Old Testament, is sometimes in Heb. shortened into *Ge-Hinnom*, גֵּי הִנֹּם; is rendered by the LXX. Γαὶεννα; and hence the New Testament name *Gehenna*. To end the idolatrous abominations practised there, Josiah had poured into the valley the city's refuse and corruption, to consume which perpetual fires were kept burning. From the torturous fires of Molech, and the ever-burning fires to consume the loathsome refuse cast into it, Gehenna became suggestive and figurative of the place of eternal torment.

7. Manners and Customs. Ver. 18. "*Make cakes to queen of heaven*: probably specially prepared for her worship, made round and flat like the disc of the moon, and burnt to her honour, with added libations. Ver. 21. "*Burnt offerings*" were wholly consumed upon the altar fire; "*sacrifices*" were in part eaten by the offerers. This "Eating the flesh" was regarded as a reconciliation meal, God and the offerer dividing and sharing the sacrifice. Ver. 29 *Cut off thine hair*:" the ancient sign of mourning (*cf.* Job i. 20; Mic. i. 16). "*Lamentation on high places*" (*cf.* Isa. xv. 2; Judges xi. 37, 38). Ver. 30. "*Abominations in the house*:" this refers to what Manasseh had done (2 Kings xxi. 3–5), and of which sacrifice the people had never repented, notwithstanding Josiah's external reforms. Ver 31 "*Burn sons and daughters in the fire*:" probably not burnt alive, but first slain (see Ezek. xvi. 21). Ver. 34. "*Voice* (or *sound*) *of the bridegroom and bride*:" an allusion to the musical procession with which the bridal pair were accompanied through the streets; a custom still, in many parts of the East, among the Jews.

8 Literary Criticisms. Ver. 3. "*I will cause you to dwell*." *Hend.* would give to the Piel form of the verb a continuative force, "I will *still cause you to dwell*" for they were already there; and this is no promise of re-occupancy. *Blayney* and the *Vulgate* adopt, "I will dwell with you." *Speaker's Com.*, "I will let you dwell." Ver. 4 "Temple of the Lord *are these*," *i.e.*, the *sacred buildings* of the Temple (*Hend.*) Or, as the pronoun is masc., some think the *Jews themselves*. But the Jews boasted in their material edifices, and were not sufficiently spiritual to claim for themselves a personally indwelling God. Ver. 7. "*For ever and ever*," lit. "to from eternity and unto eternity:" the strongest Heb. formula for perpetuity. The antecedent may be either, *I gave the land*, or *I will cause you to dwell*. Ver. 9. "*Will ye steal*," &c., a succession of infinitives. "What! to steal, to murder," &c. Ver. 10. "*We are delivered to do all*," &c., *i.e.*, by Temple attendances and observances "We are secured" against evil consequences while we continue to sin; no harm will come to us. It expresses daring self-justification, and blasphemous self-assurance. (Comp. *Noticeable Topics*, end of chap. *Sermon by Horton*). Ver. 12. "Set My name *at the first*," *i.e.*, in the first period of the Jewish commonwealth. (See above. *Geographical References*. "Shiloh"). Ver. 18. "*Queen of heaven*," *margin* of A. V. "frame, or workmanship of heaven." The Syriac and LXX so translate; although in corresponding verses (chap xliv. 17, 18, 19), the LXX render the word "queen" ἡ βασίλισσα τῶν οὐρανῶν. The Vulgate has "*regina cali*" in every instance. Ver. 22. "*For I spake not*," &c., if this be taken as a *denial of their Divine institution*, it must be understood as stating that God imposed moral duties (ver. 23) at an earlier date than He instituted the sacrificial code (*cf.* Exod xv. 26, xix. 5, with Deut. v. and vi). Or as a *repudiation* of their *sacrifices* it suggests their repulsiveness to God when alone, unattended with performance of the higher obligations: "I spake not" that sacrifices might be presented, while moral duties were at the same time refused. The words may be rendered, "I spake not to your fathers *for the sake of* (A.V. 'concerning') burnt offerings," &c., they were not the primary results God sought: He desired not sacrifices, but spiritual obedience. Ver. 24. "*Went backwards*," lit. "*were* backwards," *i.e.*, their faces turned from Me (Ps. lxxviii. 57). Ver. 28. "*Truth*" (see criticisms on the word, chap. v. 3). Ver. 29. "*Cut hair*," נֵזֶר, a *diadem* (2 Sam. i. 10). The *Nazarite's hair* so called (Numb. vi. 7, rendered "*consecration*") as being the symbol of his consecration to God, *ergo* of his royalty and dignity: and hence, leaving the primary meaning, *the long, unshorn hair* of a woman. This "diadem" she must "cast away," for she is no longer consecrate to God: she has violated her sanctity and forfeited her alliance with Jehovah.

HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER VII.

Verses 1–7. Righteous requirements and gracious promise.
" 8–15. Demoralising trust placed in external piety.
" 16–20. Indignity done to God in uniting His worship with idolatry.
" 21–28. Reliance on the value of outward religious service refuted.
" 29–34. Retribution for idolatrous abominations.

Ver. 1–7. Righteous Requirements and Gracious Promise.

Jehoiakim, an irreligious king; consequently the maintenance of divine worship was not now, as when Josiah reigned, an object of public care and royal encouragement. Probably this concourse in the temple assembled on a public fast-day. Jeremiah commissioned to use the opportunity for making known God's revulsion from "a form of godliness, not having the power thereof."

1. *Express communication from Jehovah:* "word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord." 2. *Proclaimed in a solemn scene:* "stand in the gate of the Lord's house." 3. *Addressed to a vast audience:* "hear, all Judah." 4. *Relating to professedly godly persons:* "that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord." 5. *Spoken with the weight and sanction of Highest Authority:* not the outcome of his own patriotic fervour, or pious solicitude, but "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel." 6. *Summoning to thorough reformation:* "amend," &c. (ver. 4). 7. *Granting gracious permission and opportunity:* the door of hope not closed, the day of grace prolonged.

I. In what Divinely approved piety consists. God leaves them in no uncertainty as to what He demands of man: we do not grope in darkness towards truth; are not left to conjectures and adventures. "This is the way, walk ye in it." "The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." Here is urged both a refusal and a requirement.

1. *Repudiation of superficial piety* (ver. 2, 4). Mere "entering" sanctuary, formal "worship," pride in religious externals. "Not they who say unto Me, Lord, Lord," &c. (Addenda to chap. vii. 4, "*Ecclesiasticism.*")

2. *Delineation of essential righteousness* (ver. 5, 6). Personal goodness, justice and mercy to others, fidelity to God. Compare our Lord's reply to question, "What do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke x. 27).

II. To what extent true reformation must be carried. "Thoroughly . . . thoroughly" (ver. 5). With resolution, with sincerity, with completeness. Note what it embraces; *self*, "amend," &c.; *others*, "execute judgment," &c.; *God*, no "other gods."

1. *Personal renewal:* "ways"—*i.e.*, general principles and methods of life: "doings"—*i.e.*, separate and minute deeds. Entire change of self. "Neither circumcision, &c., but a new creature."

2. *Uprightness of conduct:* specially acting justly and mercifully. We are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

3. *Cessation from wrong:* and this wrong is of three forms—harming the weak, "hurting" ourselves, and dishonouring God (ver. 6).

III. With what rewards godliness is encouraged. Civil and sacred privileges (ver. 7).

1. *Present advantages.* "In this place;" Jerusalem or temple; where holy comforts and favours cluster, the meeting-place of God. "Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is."

2. *Imperishable prospects.* "This land for ever." "Begotten to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, and fadeth not away."

IV. To what disasters irreligion tends. The conditional promise implies a possible reverse, dark and sad.

1. *Loss of boasted heritages.* Not "dwell in this place;" the temple and city, with all civil and religious advantages forfeited; exiles.

2. *Banishment from God Himself.* "Removed from land" into captivity. To be cast out from where God dwelt, "Zion," equivalent to a Jew to being banished from Him who dwelt in Zion. "Depart from Me, ye cursed." "Punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power."

Ver. 8–15. Demoralising Trust placed in External Piety.

A startling truism that *evil simulates good.* Satan himself takes the form of "angel of light" in order to cover his own hideousness and deceive others. Sinners hide conscious wrong by pretentious righteousness. Two results:

1. *Self-deception.* A dangerous device to assume a mock piety. Deceivers come to "deceive themselves." Reflex action of insincerity: "believe a lie," and thus ignore danger while courting and hastening to destruction. Wicked taken in their own net, fall into pit digged for others, are hung on gallows themselves prepared for different use.

2. *Self-degradation.* Pretence of goodness blinds sinners to the revulsion and awfulness of iniquity: "conscience seared." Evil looks less heinous to sinners themselves when clothed with the garb of pietism. Licence is thus given to iniquity, and sin grows at once bolder, self-excusing, shameless, and runs unchecked to vile excesses. Christ pronounced those men worst and most hopeless who robed villainy with piety (Matt. xxiii. 25–33).

I. The attitude of devotional sincerity (ver. 10). 1. In *right place:* "this house." 2. In *right posture:* "stand before Me." "Ye outwardly appear righteous unto men" (Matt. xxiii. 28). Judged of at that moment, all seemed well. But what manner of men were they when away from God's house? Life has two sides: most men *seem good when in holy scenes* and on sacred occasions; what is their conduct elsewhere? Moreover, there may be vast difference in a man's *outer and inner life;* and God looks within; so that even when standing piously before Him they may be loathsome in His sight. *Attitude* is not everything.

II. The subtlety of religious delusions. 1. *False trusts:* "in lying words" (ver. 9), and "this house wherein ye trust" (ver. 14). Ready to believe in smooth words of *lying prophets* (v. 31), or to rest upon mere *cant phrases* (vii. 4), or to repose on *religious externals* (ver. 14). 2. *Presumptuous assurance:* "We are delivered" (ver. 10)—*i.e.*, having performed our religious observances in the temple, we have *atoned for past* sins, and are *free to start afresh.* Romanists assume the same licence: attend "mass," and so leave all burdens behind, and gain liberty for indulgences in sin. Protestants, too, who "attend the Sacrament" and return to worldliness. They also who trust in penitent prayers, and excuse themselves in wrong: "sin that grace may abound." God hates every false way.

III. The degradations of spiritual falsity. The delusion that sin may be continued with impunity or easily escaped acts as an encouragement to every form of wrong. Hypocrites, who make external ceremonies a kind of expiation, readily fall into the seductions of sin, and follow the enticements of their own evil hearts. To what depths did these sink! 1. *Glaring immoralities* (ver. 9). 2. *Revolting idolatries* (ver. 9). 3. *Ecclesiastical profanities* (ver. 11).

IV. The futility of sacred messages. "I spake unto you, rising up early," &c. (ver. 13). 1. *Instructions and admonitions* were not withheld: thus God did His part to restrain and rectify them. 2. *Invitations to true religion* were sent: "I called you:" thus they were allured and entreated as well as warned. 3. *Indifference and insensibility* marked their conduct: they were without disposition to repent, without desire for holiness; so they trifled still by offering to God a ceremonial piety, but refusing practical godliness. Note: The most potent and

urgent messages from God are neutralised by the carnal security in which hypocrites entrench themselves.

V. The overthrow of sinners and their subterfuges (ver. 14, 15). 1. *Zion seemed a secure possession.* They "trusted" in it; relied upon the fact that God had given it in covenant with their fathers; they deemed it inalienable and imperishable (Ps. cxxxii. 14). Yet, being used for evil ends (ver. 11), and made a delusive trust (ver. 4, 14), it had lost its worth in God's sight, and should come to ruin as Shiloh had done. Nothing retains its *sacredness* or its *security* when prostituted to purposes of falsehood and impiety. 2. *Judah believed herself safe from banishment.* David was of Judah; God had made special promises to this royal tribe. Messiah was to come of it. Judah arrogated to herself a safety Israel did not possess. But no privileges or promises screen the guilty from judgment. God's special plans never interfere with His common laws. Sinners are condemned, wicked shall not escape; and these laws will not be suspended, even though we seek to hide ourselves behind covenants and decrees.

Application: *Delusion works demoralisation. Demoralisation ensures destruction.*

Ver. 16–20. INDIGNITY TO JEHOVAH IN UNITING HIS WORSHIP WITH IDOLATRY.

"Seest thou what they do?" (ver. 17). The sight was abhorrent to God. They had professed to accept Him as their Lord, by standing before Him in His house (ver. 10); but their conduct outside the temple, in the very "streets of Jerusalem," as well as throughout the "cities of Judah," was flauntingly audacious and provoking. Such hypocrisy was loathsome to God.

Compromises, combining God's worship with idolatrous practises, incense Jehovah. They dishonour Him, rob worship of all worth, render religion a mockery and homage a vanity. By their compromises they wronged and provoked God; for

1. *They divided His glory*, by raising idols to equality with Him. 2. *They degraded His glory*, by lowering Him to equality with them. For by sharing worship between God and "other gods," they treated Him as worthy no more homage than they.

I. Man's astounding insolence towards Jehovah. Their idolatrous conduct had as its *motive* malice; and as its *end*, "that they might provoke God to anger" (ver. 18). They aimed at that result. But, in so doing, men may ignite a fire they would fain yet cannot quench. 1. The Divine anger is a *solemn reality*. 2. Man's conduct is *capable of provoking the anger* of the Almighty! 3. Indignity to God *evokes indignation* from God. Wonderful man's power! Terrible this dire abuse of it!

II. Outrages done to God revert on the sinner (ver. 19). Which means, Is it Me they provoke; or will they not rather provoke themselves to wrath against themselves, and to confusion and shame? 1. *They injure themselves more than they incense God.* 2. They will *bear the heavier consequences* of their wickedness. God is *dishonoured* and provoked thereby, but they ensure *destruction* to themselves and "revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Sinners will then be *wrathful with themselves;* "gnashing of teeth:" and reap "*shame*" for every dishonour they have done to the Lord.

III. Pitiful intercession refused on their behalf (ver. 16). Jeremiah was compassionate, and ready to interpose with prayers: but, 1. *God corrects the prophet's mistaken charity.* Piety before patriotism; what is *due to God* before unthinking intervention on the behalf of wrongdoers. Pity must not blindly interpose to prevent justice. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" 2. *God directs attention to their guilty deeds.* "Seest thou," &c. (ver. 17). Jehovah sees; and He fathoms the depths of malice which prompt men's hostile actions.

IV. Anger provoked in God will be assuredly poured out (ver. 20). 1. *As a deluge, in fulness and fury:* "poured out." 2. *Falling upon the whole people.*

on the *offenders* themselves ("man"), and their *treasures* ("this place, on beasts, trees, fruits"). 3. *Unquenchable in its ravaging work:* for it will be a deluge of "fire," and will "burn" inextinguishably. "Who will dwell with the everlasting burnings?" "Flee to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

Ver. 21–28. Reliance on the Value of Outward Religious Service Refuted.

Jeremiah swept this false security utterly from beneath them: their ceremonial observances were *worthless in themselves*, except as an expression of spiritual homage and loyalty, and were *without Divine sanction*, except as they were accompanied by practical godliness. He appeals to the original covenant of God with them, and affirms: i. That the *moral code was primarily given;* the ceremonial laws followed at a later date, and as a concession to their weakness, when, by the worship of the golden calf, they had proved themselves unworthy of, and unfitted for, a purely spiritual dispensation. ii. *That the moral code was of primary importance.* God could readily dispense with sacrificial offerings if their practical obedience were maintained; but however lavish their sacrifices, all were repulsive if obedience was withheld.

Henry—"See with what contempt God here speaks of their ceremonial service (ver. 21). Go on in, and add to, your sacrifices, and 'eat flesh,' for that is all the good you will obtain from them; no other benefit while you live in disobedience!

"I. He shows them that obedience was the only thing He required of them (ver. 22, 23). He appeals to the original contract when they were first formed into a people (Exod. xv. 26). The condition of their being God's people was, 'If you will obey my voice indeed' (Exod. xix. 5). Afterwards He gave them ceremonial institutions, as trials of their obedience, and assistances to their repentance and faith. The Levitical law begins thus, 'If any man of you will bring an offering' (Lev. i. 2. ii. 1), as if intended rather to *regulate* sacrifice than to require it.

"II. He shows them that disobedience was the only thing which offended Him. They broke God's commandments in their conversation, while observing them, in some instances, in their devotion (ver. 24, 25). 1 *They set up their own will in competition with God's.* 'Hearkened not, nor inclined their ear' to *God's* laws; and made *their own counsels* their guide, and evil *imaginations* became their law. 2. *If they began well, they did not proceed,* but soon flew off; 'went backward.' 3. *When God sent messages to them by His prophets, they were still disobedient* (ver. 25). As deaf to the prophets as they were to the law (ver. 26). 4. *Their practice and character were still the same:* worse, and not better, than their fathers. (*a.*) Jeremiah can himself witness to their disobedience (ver. 27). (*b.*) He must therefore own they deserved God's displeasure and abandonment to destruction (ver. 28). Notorious for their obstinacy, incapable of receiving or uttering 'truth:' false both to God and man."

Ver. 29–34. Retribution for Idolatrous Abominations.

"Cut off thine hair," &c. (see *Lit. Crit. supra* on ver. 29): both as a token of extreme woe, and also of the loss of the consecrated character.

I. A mournful occasion for bitterest grief (ver. 29). 1. Loss of holiness entails loss of happiness. 2. Rejection by God and abandonment to His wrath suggest alarming calamities. *Spiritual,* in that the soul loses her light, her security, her comfort, her hope; and *temporal,* in that protection, promises, benefactions, are all forfeited and alienated. A desolate case! Yet not *loss of God alone,* but the *positive woes of "His wrath."* All good things withdrawn, all evil things threatened.

II. A revolting spectacle of impious desecration (ver. 30, 31) 1. *Insulted*

God to His face in His own house by their abominations. A loathsome intrusion upon and pollution of sacred scenes. Equally so when sin is cherished in our hearts (Ezek. xiv. 4). 2. *Practised the most heinous atrocities in their idolatrous homage* (ver. 31). Deeds so dreadful as never to have "come into the mind" of God. Man's fertility in wicked inventions.

III. **A terrible visitation of righteous judgments** (ver. 32, 33). 1. *Slaughterers* (of their own children) *shall be visited with slaughter* (from the Chaldeans) 2. *The scene of cruel death* (of helpless infants) *shall be burdened with the dead;* the victims of the avenging sword should be more than graves could inter. 3. *Ravaging beasts of prey would usurp the very spot where now living men assembled* for idolatrous ceremonies; so complete would be the devastation of human life. "Ge-Hinnom," a figure of *hell.* (See *Personal Allusions*, ver. 31, above.)

IV. **A woful desolation of happy scenes** (ver. 34). 1. *All joy silenced in the now cheerful streets.* 2. *All life departed from now crowded cities.* 3. *All beauty and fertility swept from the now luxuriant soil;* "the land desolate." Music, life, and fertility: these symbolise the *sum of Divine favours.* God's choicest benefactions. Their loss portrays illimitable woe. So utterly does sin reverse all the blessedness of life and the hopes of religion.

HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON SUCCESSIVE VERSES OF CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1, 2. *Preliminary Notes.*

Though the people were rioting in idolatry they yet visited God's temple; and even came thither from "all Judah" (ver. 2): "all the cities of Judah" (xxvi. 2). This discourse must have been delivered on a public feast-day or fast-day, for on no ordinary occasion would so representative an assembly be convened. Probably it was an assembly specially summoned; the apathy and alienation of the people being too settled to allow of their coming together in such vast numbers from distant "cities," unless called to Jerusalem by royal edict, or impelled to come in consequence of national calamities. The occasion was well suited for a searching and solemn appeal to the national conscience. Jeremiah seems to have stood in the inner gate, and faced the crowds as they thronged in at the outer gates into the open court. He detained them there with his faithful discourse ere they passed through "the gate," where he himself stood, into the inner court, where worship was performed and sacrifice offered. He thus stood between them and further religious mockeries, calling them to pause, reflect, and repent.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* A COMMISSION TO PREACH.

Certainly, this is not running without being sent. Some mistake their avocation,—rush to a "charge" which God has not committed to them. The result: "Things without life, giving sound." Nothing higher than that; words, but no "word,"—no definite message for men from God. How different when the speaker *must* testify the truth Divinely intrusted to him! (Rom. x. 15). Jeremiah's case is identical with that of every true preacher (ver. 1).

I. **The Divine regulation of the preacher's work.** 1. *The scene* of the preacher's labour: "stand in *the* gate," &c., definitely localised by God. 2. *The opportunity:* "ye that *enter*," the very hour fixed by God, as they were entering; an auspicious and appropriate moment. 3. *The audience:* "all ye of Judah," and ye of Judah "*that enter;*" extensive, yet limited; for the Gospel and truth are for *all*, yet only for those who *will hear.* 4. *The topic:* "this word," definite and direct. Many themes might fill our thoughts and our speech, but God has something to say, and "we cannot but speak the things," &c. Note *its origin* (ver. 1). (Addenda to chap. vii., "*The Preacher.*")

II. The preacher's performance of his Divine commission. Like Jeremiah, who subordinated himself and his powers to God's requirements, he fulfils

his "charge." 1. *In literal obedience.* "Stands" where he is directed, speaks what he is commanded. 2. *With fearless ardour.* "Proclaimed;" not cowardlily whispered it, nor humbly apologised for it. 3. *As Jehovah's witness* (ver. 3): an ambassador, a spokesman for God and in His name. It makes obedience easy, though the duty be onerous and dangerous, to realise that there is a solemn Authority behind us and our words.

III. The practical lessons of this prophetic incident. (See Preliminary Notes on ver. 1, above.) 1. *Large audiences* present special opportunities; and a preacher, like "Wisdom, cries in the chief places of concourse." 2. *Professedly religious* persons need the preacher's word. Simply because they "enter gates to worship" does not show them beyond error and without need of earnest ministrations. 3. *Before men worship*, they require solemn and special warning; need be summoned to pause and know what worship God accepts and demands (Phil. iii. 3). 4. *God discerns the spirit*, as well as the attitude, of those who enter His temple for outward worship. 5. *He sends messages* according to the condition of the people: warning for those in error, consolation for the sad, calls for the weary, &c. Hence, *hearers should seriously take heed to what they hear:* for the message suggests God's estimate of them and their needs.

Ver. 3. (See on ver. 5–7.) "*Your ways,*" = general lines of conduct, common habits, prevailing laws of feeling, thought, and practice. "*Your doings,*" = the separate and individual acts which, by frequency and repetition, form habits. "*I will cause you to dwell,*" *i.e.* peaceably, protected from the spoiler and from captivity. It promises nothing new, but pledges the continuance of the blessings long enjoyed (ver. 7). "*In this place,*" primarily, the temple, as the central joy and privilege of Israel; and, secondarily, "the land," of which the temple is the ornament and glory.

Theme: SINNERS SUMMONED TO SELF-IMPROVEMENT. "Thus saith the Lord, *Amend your ways!*"

Faulty conduct is to be rectified. God asks practical righteousness; correcting the wrong of our life, culturing the good and the godly.

Unwarrantable to teach that human virtue and goodness are nothing to God, are, indeed, repulsive to Him. "He hath shown thee, O man, what is good:" and both summons to attempt it, and approves its attainment.

Equally unscriptural to teach that God bids men desist from effort to rise out of evil into a good and godly life (Isa. lv. 6, 7; Rom. viii. 13). True, no self-improvement can save a soul. Jesus alone saves. But there is room for the free action of a man to "cease from evil and do good" both before and after his conversion to Christ.

This Divine call

I. Marks out the prevailing faultiness of an irreligious life. Both your "ways and doings," in large and small matters, in principles and practices. Yet, observe, here is no call to *abandon* altogether their course of life, but to *alter* it; remedy the errors and mistakes and blemishes. Ceremonialism not itself wrong and forbidden, but it should be accompanied by practical righteousness. 1. *The direction of the life* may not be *wholly wrong:* not required to reverse or abandon their ways, but "amend them." 2. Yet *good deeds may be performed in an evil manner:* life, a series of faults, in spirit and method. 3. So *a life ostensibly good may be repulsive to God:* so much so, as to threaten the loss of God and the "holy city."

II. Sanctions man's resolute efforts to rectify his faults. "Amend." So far from repudiating man's endeavour to reform his wrongs, and acquire virtue and goodness, God here calls to it. Hence it is: 1. *Possible to man.* 2. *Approved by God.* 3. *Incumbent on each.* (Mark x. 20, 21.)

III. Pledges God's beneficent recognition of man's diligent reform. 1. This *implies a terrifying alternative:* that, neglecting the duty of rectifying existing evils, God would outlaw them. 2. This *covenants a gracious recompense:*

that, "redeeming the time," and living "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," He would retain them in His merciful favour, and give them a perpetual heritage in Canaan. For this end, "the grace of God hath appeared" (Titus ii. 11–15); and Christ "gave Himself for us;" and to such rectitude of life men are to be "exhorted with all authority."

Ver. 4. *Theme:* SANCTIMONIOUS SELF-DELUSIONS.

When religious sincerity is absent from the heart, all religious words upon the lips, whether pious talk or sanctuary exercises, are "*lying words.*" Generally, too, when the heart's religion is false, the lip religion is more emphatic: it utters itself with a *threefold fervour.* Hollow things emit most sound. So "The temple of the Lord," thrice over: *words* must speak out lustily when the consciousness bears no witness. Mighty rivers flow in silence; shallow streams compensate for their poverty by making more noise.

First, Concerning lying words.

I. They falsify God's character: implying that God would not destroy His temple, though profaned; that He *connived* at their criminality: their sins would not lead the glory to depart, or the sanctuary to be destroyed.

II. They delude men's souls: allure to false trusts, import a vain hope between a sinner and the punishment of sin. "The temple" promised them a guarantee against and an asylum from ruin, thus encouraging presumption and iniquity.

III. They pervert sacred things: *God's house* was abused,—became a rendezvous of villainy, evil felt itself secure there. *God's altar* was perverted; instead of its sacrifices being regarded as a surrender of sin, they were offered to condone and license sin. *God's covenants* were misused. He had, indeed, promised to dwell for ever in Zion, and to give His people a lasting heritage and resting-place there; but they ignored the conditions of this promise, that they should be a "holy people," and keep unstained His "holy sanctuary."

Thus sinners allow themselves to "continue in sin that grace may abound;" silence, rebukes of conscience by boasting the cleansing blood of Christ; make the cross an asylum for sin rather than a resting-place from sin.

Second, Concerning trusting in lying words.

The triple repetition of "the temple of the Lord" may express the intense feeling, the vigorous assurance, with which this confidence in their safety, because they had the sanctuary among them, was cherished. The triple utterance seems to denote *intensity.* (Comp. also Isa. vi. 3; Jer. xxii. 29.) Or, the repetition may suggest the *frequency* with which this boast of possessing God's temple was heard among them. *Henry* says, "It was the cant of the times. If they heard an awakening sermon, they lulled themselves asleep again with this, 'We cannot but do well, for we have the temple of the Lord among us.' It is common for those who are farthest from God to boast themselves most of their being near to the church."

Jeremiah's remonstrance against this delusive and sanctimonious cry suggests, concerning the Jews—

I. A preference for peaceful prophesyings. Most probably this illusory boast in having the temple was the *theme of false prophets,* who prophesied smooth things among them (comp. Mic. iii. 11). The sentence looks like a quotation from the teachings of one of these deceitful leaders; which was speedily caught up into popular currency, and become the answering retort whenever Jeremiah denounced the people or foretold the coming woes. They sought to drown his serious words with this mocking boast. They desired only to hear what flattered them, even though it beguiled them.

II. A repose on false securities. This audacious appeal to the temple may be thus interpreted: "*The temple of the Lord*" in Jerusalem has been consecrated as *His abode;* therefore, enemies shall not conquer and capture the city; we are, therefore, safe within

its shelter. "*The temple of the Lord*" is the *throne of His glory*; and He will not vacate His throne for heathen to possess it; an invincible stronghold have we; we are, therefore, safe under its strong protection. "*The temple of the Lord*" has been *given in covenant* to His people; it cannot therefore be alienated. God's word may not fail; we, therefore, are safe in enjoyment of covenanted blessings. Thus men say still, "We are in the church!" "We have been baptized!" "We are the elect!" Refuges of lies.

III. **A vaunting over external sanctities.** "Men in all ages have evinced a proneness to attribute to external and ceremonial circumstances a virtue which does not inhere in them" (*Hend.*). Because, forsooth, these Jews *presented themselves thrice a year in this temple*, they imagined they had done all Jehovah required of them: He could not withdraw His favour from such a pious nation! Or, because within the temple the *sacrifices and ceremonies went on continually*, they were doing all that was required by Him, and were entitled to His gracious regard. Or, because as a nation they *maintained by their contributions* the temple fabrics and ministries, they had purchased a right to Divine care and blessings: "These temple edifices were only kept up at great cost; how *generous* have we been for God's cause, how deserving therefore are we" (comp. Zeph. iii. 11). God accepts no substitute for personal holiness. *Punctilious outward observance, lavish and ceaseless sacrifices, free bestowment of wealth*, all are repudiated when they are made the boast of the proud and the excuse of impiety. (Addenda to chap. vii. 4, "*Ecclesiasticism.*")

Ver. 5. *Theme*: THOROUGHNESS. "If ye will *thoroughly* amend, and *thoroughly* execute judgment."

Over against their self-delusive words (ver. 4), Jeremiah places the indispensable requirements of Jehovah: not an *outward* ceremonial piety, but a personal religious life; not a *partial* and evasive obedience, but a righteousness all-inclusive and practical,—"*thoroughly*" (Luke xi. 42). Only when temple-worship (ver. 2) is the *expression* of sincere and sanctified hearts, and is *attended and attested* by works of righteousness, is it accepted of God. He asks that our whole life, equally in sacred and secular scenes, "towards God and towards men," be holiness unto the Lord.

I. *The largeness of the Divine outgoings toward men* justifies His demand for thoroughness. He who asks "thoroughness" should himself so act, or there is inconsistency in the demand. But certainly in the lavishment of God's gifts, the beneficence of His dealings, the wealth of His covenanted promises, and His faultless fidelity in fulfilling His word, *He had done all things* "*thoroughly*" for Judah.

In general, and with universal application, it stands that: 1. *There is no incompleteness in God's works*, or *paucity in His provisions for human good*. Look out on nature, look into revelation, ponder redemption, and all show God's works and ways for man to be lavish, perfect, "thorough." 2. There *is no neglect by God of one side of human need while attending to the other*. He did not overlook their temporal good while working for their spiritual, nor *vice versa*. Judah had been thus one-sided; but not God. *Ergo*, as God's ways with men are characterised by thoroughness, He is justified in asking and entitled to receive thoroughness in man's response of obedience and love. (Addenda to chap. vii. 5, "*Thoroughness.*")

II. The sphere and action of religion compasses our whole life with thoroughness. There is no part or phase of our life which escapes the control of religion; so that he who is *truly* religious, responsive to the dictates and demands of religion, is *thoroughly* religious. Thus:

1. *It claims and controls the whole of our nature and faculties.*

2. *It asserts an empire over every act of our life*, "*whatsoever we do.*"

3. *It extends its sway to, and utters its counsels upon, all the relationships and duties of society.* (See ver. 5, 6.)

4. *It reaches all along the path of our life, from birth into eternity.* Religion is thorough in its comprehensive rule over, and directions for, the life of man.

III. The response which God receives from man should be distinguished by thoroughness. Wherever else man practises reservation, here he should hold back no part of the price. Our godliness should be thorough if it is to be *happy* to ourselves or *honouring* to God.

1. *It is the natural issue of honest acceptance of religion.* The heart that finds and resolves for Christ, and obeys its own instinctive promptings, cannot yield a mere partial response.

2. *It is the inevitable return of filial gratitude.* "How much owe I unto my Lord?" "Ye are not your own; body, soul and spirit are the Lord's."

3. *It is the essential law of piety.* God deserves all. "Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, &c., and neighbour as thyself." He who responds rightly yields himself fully to all the claims of God (Rom. xii. 1).

IV. The piety which refuses full obedience to God is a lamentable violation of the sacred law of thoroughness. Christ says, "I would thou wert cold or hot." He loathes the "lukewarm." He Himself held nothing back *from us;* gave Himself, His life, His redemption, His perfect virtue, all for us; "what shall we render unto the Lord?" Less than "all for Christ" is wholly undeserving.

1. *It is a mean return for the grace we have received.*

2. *It is a worthless fulfilment of religious obligations.* God abhors a compromising piety, a divided heart.

3. *It is a discreditable exhibition of godliness.* Degrades piety in the eyes of scoffers, and evokes swift rebuke. (Comp. Acts v. 1–11.)

"Thine am I by all ties;
But chiefly Thine,
That through Thy sacrifice,
Thou, Lord, art mine:
By Thine own cords of love, so sweetly wound
Around me, I to Thee am closely bound."

Only in full dedication of our *love to God* and *life for men* in Christ's name, can we approach the standard of godly thoroughness.

Ver. 5, 6. *Comments.*

In thus particularising the evils they must discard, the prophet (1.) *implies* that justice and equity were violated, that cruelty and perfidiousness, fraud and rapine, prevailed amongst them; and (2.) *enjoins* upon them the observance of the moral law as evidence of their sincere repentance and loyalty to God. He thus demanded "fruits meet for repentance," which would make their religion a practical reality, not a mere lofty sentiment.

"*Shedding innocent blood*" refers (1.) To judicial murders (condemnation of innocent persons). (2.) To violent attacks on prophets and godly men, as in Manasseh's case (2 Kings xxi. 16)."—*Keil.* (Comp. chap. xxvi. 15, 23.)

"*Innocent blood*" probably points with indignant emphasis to the murder and sacrifice of infants to Molech (ver. 31.)

Ver. 7. *Theme:* THE EVERLASTING INHERITANCE. "I gave to your fathers for ever and ever."

I. Its duration conditional. God covenants with men for an inalienable heritage; but the terms require that they do not themselves alienate it by unfaithfulness and apostasy.

II. Its forfeiture possible. Men's sins neutralise sacred covenants. No standing in grace but our sin may overthrow. We may lose our securest and most boasted possessions.

III. Its continual enjoyment desired. (1.) *By God;* for He gave the inheritance to them, and pleads with them to retain it. (2.) *By man;* for as the Jews valued and hoped to keep their land, so we desire to preserve for ourselves a place in grace, and obtain an eternal home in the promised land. But *desire* is not sufficient; obligations must be fulfilled. "*If* ye amend, &c., *then* will I cause you to dwell in this land," &c. (Addenda to chap. vii., "*Covenant.*")

Note the terms of their "everlasting possession" of Canaan, in the *original*

covenant (Gen. xvii. 8): "I will be their God." But instead, "they walk after *other* gods" (see ver. 6); hence the covenant was broken, and the gift reverted to its Donor.

Ver. 8. *Theme:* INJURIOUSNESS OF FALSE THEORIES.

These "lying words" were either teachings of delusive prophets, or their own unwarantable arguments. (See on ver. 4, above.) They "cannot profit," *i.e.*, they tend to mischief.

Calvin remarks that their words of falsehood turned to a contrary end what God had instituted. Services performed *in the temple* were designed to preserve unity of faith among the whole people. *Sacrifices* were intended to show the people: 1. *They deserved the death* which victims endured. 2. *Expiation was only by blood*, typical of the blood of Jesus Christ. But there was no repentance for sin, no true appropriation of sacrificial merit — for they were not led to holy faith; nay, their ceremonies licensed them to freer sin. Thus they were "lying words," when the signs were separated from their end.

Dealing dishonestly with God brings delusions upon ourselves; and the three steps are: 1. Wilful *dishonesty*. 2. Self-*delusion*. 3. Inevitable *destruction*.

Ver. 9, 10. *Theme:* DETESTABLE GUILT UNDER SANCTION OF RELIGION.

"*Will ye steal, murder, &c., and come and stand before Me, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?*"

An outcry of Divine revulsion and indignation. In the presence of such profanity even God stands appalled; and utters Himself in exclamations of horror: "*What! to steal? to murder? &c.* And yet come and stand *before Me* in this house!"

1. What appalling criminality is here! Surely such sins could only have been perpetrated in some "dark place of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty." But lo! *in Jerusalem!*—in the very centre of sacred revelations and holy privileges.

2. What treachery against Jehovah is here! Surely the result of ignorance; "they knew not what they did;" for had they known the right, they never could have done such wrongs (ver. 10), insulted God and polluted His house. Alas! they knew the right; but sinned thus foully amid fullest light, and notwithstanding the persuasions and protests of God's prophet. Consider, with amaze:

I. Into what revolting iniquities godly men may relapse (ver. 9). Yes, "godly men;" for they *believed*, and *boasted* themselves such (ver. 10).

1. *The glaring enormity of their sins.* Set forth in two trios: (*a.*) Violation of civil laws and domestic decencies: "steal, murder, commit adultery;" outraged the security of property, sacredness of life, sanctity of homes. (*b.*) Violation of sacred laws and Divine obligations: "swear falsely, incense to Baal, walk after other gods." "Swear falsely" may mean perjury, or be an allusion to former charges (comp. iv. 2, v. 2), *of swearing by false gods.* Then this second trio of crimes points to their idolatrous *oaths*, idolatrous *homage*, idolatrous *service:* "swear, burn incense, walk after."

2. *The special aggravation of their guilt.* They knew better; their guilt was wilful, habitual, and persistent; their sins were manifold; they committed themselves to evil fearlessly, without restraint, in open shamelessness; they did not even shun the worst and most horrible forms of sin—violence to property, life, and virtue; they wronged each other and then insulted God. (*a.*) Rejection of God's laws. (*b.*) Outrage of social rights and happiness. (*c.*) Adoration presented to that abominable thing, Baal. (*d.*) Substitution of *unknown* deities in God's stead: thus they deserted Jehovah notwithstanding all they "knew" of His grace, miraculous favours, and resplendent glories, and sought out idols of whom they knew nothing. Thereby they injured their own selves, their happiness, peace, and safety; "to your own hurt" (ver. 6). *Wrong always avenges itself upon wrong doers.* (Comp. Heb. x. 26, *sq.*).

II. Unto what audacious effronteries

and excuses hypocrisy may attain. (Ver. 10; *cf.* Ezek. xxiii. 39.)

1. *Their detestable attitude of piety.* There was no piety in their hearts, yet there they "stand" in their brazen hypocrisy "before Me," as though having done nothing offensive, and having no cause for confusion of face.

2. *Their insolent pollution of holy scenes.* "In this house," where such godly kings and worshippers have done true homage; where your pious king Josiah so recently restored religious services. "Which is called by My name,"—which bears My name (*Hitzig*); on which my glory rests (*Keil*). In the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High these polluted hypocrites dared to come!

3. *Their blasphemous language of self-extenuation.* "We are delivered," &c.; *i.e.*, by our temple sacrifices we have atoned for our sins, and therefore are free to start afresh upon new courses of wickedness (*Speaker's Com.*) We are discharged from our guilt; now it shall do us no hurt (*Henry*). We have appeased God's wrath by our offerings, and turned aside all punishment for our sins, now we may go on again in "doing abominations." Their standing before God and service in the temple, were *put in substitution for the holy living* God required, and used as an *excuse for continuance in sin*, and as a *guarantee against threatened punishment.* (Addenda to chap. vii., "*Insolent profanity.*")

["They thought themselves freed from guilt when they had offered their sacrifices, and at liberty again to be immoral and idolatrous. We might think such a state of infatuation impossible, but it has existed among those calling themselves Christians, and exists now. *Gataker* mentions a common saying among ignorant Papists, 'We must sin to be shriven, and shriven to sin.' The turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness is the same thing."—*Ed. of Calvin.*]

Ver. 11. *Theme:* ROBBERY IN THE SANCTUARY.

It was no mere conjecture, an exaggerated supposition. "Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord." The charge points to:

I. The robbery of the temple services of their cleansing design. By such miscreants as you are (ver. 9), consorting here and coming here with the design to secure immunity to sin and impunity from punishment, ye rob My temple of its true end, its services of their significance and intention, and make this house an asylum for malefactors,—a robbers' retreat. There they comforted themselves in their iniquities, acquired fresh assurance in sinning, and used the place designed to terminate sin, by *expiating it on the altar* and *extinguishing it in the heart*, as a shelter for encouraging, licensing, and fortifying themselves in iniquity.

II. The spoliation of its services of their acceptableness to God. They were fragrant and well-pleasing to Him as expressions of penitence for sin and the return of the soul in humility and faith to Him; but abhorrent when, as now, they were used superstitiously as convenient external methods for quieting the conscience and licensing crime. Better that there be no temple and no sacrifices, than that men should use them so perversely. Thus they robbed the services of all worth to God, and made them an evil savour to Him.

III. The discredit cast upon Jehovah's holiness and glory. These vile worshippers, encouraging their profanity in God's very house, virtually made God the patron of their enormities. So all who use Christianity as a cloak for their sins, or as a convenient expiation of daily evils, which are neither repented of nor abandoned, make Christ a minister of sin. Religion is thereby travestied, and the holy Lord degraded, — His character is contaminated. It was charged upon Christ, "*Friend of publicans and sinners,*" as implying He Himself was no better than those who gathered around Him, ignoring the fact that Christ only befriended sinners in order to save them from further sinning.

IV. The withholding from God of His true deserts. "He desired not sacrifice; the sacrifices of God are a

broken heart and contrite spirit." He asked not ceremonial homage, but the adoration of the reverent soul; not altar-services, but life obedience. "Will a man rob God?" Yes: see Malachi i. 7, 10, 13, 14, iii. 8. So do all who offer Him the mere "form of godliness;" hymns sung without heart, prayers offered with spiritless routine, service rendered without joyous love, gifts bestown without grace in the heart, profession made where there is no true piety behind; the flippant cry, Lord, Lord! but not doing the things that He commands; the Olivet "Hosannah!" followed by the Pretorium "Crucify Him!" the impulsive testimony, "I will go with Thee to prison and judgment," ending in, "I know not the man." Heartless piety is a robbery of the best and most prized offerings which the holy God can receive.

V. The grief and indignation of God over such profanity. "Behold, even I have seen it." His eyes behold, and His eyelids try the children of men. The fair show in the flesh carries well with men, but Jesus, when He found the *leafy* tree fruitless, *cursed it!* "I hate robbery for a burnt-offering." (Addenda to chap. vii., "*Sacrilege.*")

Note: The limestone ranges of Palestine were full of inaccessible caves, whither robbers sheltered themselves securely from the penalties of their violent deeds. In like manner, these "robbers" sought refuge in the sanctuary from the *consequences* of guilt, but were in no disposition to *abandon their evil ways*; for they "loved the gains" and indulgences "of unrighteousness," the "pleasures of sin."

"*Den of robbers*;" words adopted by Christ in upbraiding the defilers of the temple (Matt. xxi. 13), and suggesting the parallel in the spiritual prostitution and moral degradation of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's days and our Lord's time. The like evil state merited like condemnation, and led on to like disasters and overthrow.

Ver. 12–14. *Theme:* VIOLATED SANCTUARIES DOOMED.

No place, however sacred, Shiloh or Jerusalem, will be spared from overthrow, when wickedness has desecrated its sanctity. Jehovah Himself will "overturn and overturn" where His reign is impeded and His holiness impugned by profanity. Nothing evil shall escape, because, forsooth, it once bore a better character. *Shiloh*, God's first resting-place, falls into disrepute because of iniquity. Even "*angels*, who kept not their first estate," were outcast from their former dignity and blessedness. *Israel*, though once "holiness to the Lord" (ii. 3), was banished into captivity. "The righteousness of the *righteous man* shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression" (Ezek. xxxiii. 12). Violated sanctuaries are overthrown.

I. A historic fact (ver. 12). 1. *Easily verified:* "Go to Shiloh and see." 2. *Fully accounted for:* "On account of the wickedness," &c. 3. *God's own work:* "See what *I did* to it." Where "I set My name at the first," there see My work of desolation. For God will let no profaned thing stand.

II. A present peril (ver. 13, 14).

1. *No exemption because of special favour.* Shiloh was God's "first" resting-place; it had, therefore, the tender *charm* of being His earliest abode, and the *honour* of antiquity.

2. *Like provocations evoke like consequences* (ver. 13). The evils which came upon "my people Israel" will not be evaded by Judah if Jerusalem is desecrated by "abominations" as Shiloh was by "wickedness."

3. *No self-assurance of immunity will avert the result.* "This house *wherein ye trust*" (ver. 14), and of whose security ye boast (ver. 4), will perish notwithstanding. Our confidence will be of no avail.

III. A symbolic truth. Pass from material fabrics to the larger application, and—1. *There are temples still which bear God's holy name,*—not only sanctuaries, but ecclesiastical *systems and sects*, on which Christians pride themselves, and of which they boast (ver. 4). And there are *personal shrines*, believing hearts, where Christ has rested; and many, many are the Christian hearts wherein His Spirit still dwells, as truly

as in the "house at Shiloh" and "temple at Jerusalem" (2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21, 22). 2. *God's indwelling presence may be alienated and lost.* Not a safe theory that "once a Christian always a Christian." 3. *To retain the Divine presence we must maintain the "holiness which becometh His house."* 4. *There are souls which have known the light and love of God now desolated.* Like ancient Shiloh and beautiful Jerusalem, and the graceful churches of Asia—forsaken: so *Judas* and *Demas*, and those who have "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." (See Heb. x. 38.) And "if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17).

Ver. 13. *Theme:* GOD'S EARNESTNESS IN DEALING WITH SINNERS.

The earnestness and activity which prophets exhibited in seeking to rouse the nation to realise and avert the nearing destruction, God appropriates to Himself: it was Jehovah Himself earnest and active. His prophets were but channels along which the Divine fervour flowed. It was God who "rose early and spake." Shows

I. Deep solicitude. "Rising up early, I spake, I called." 1. Apprehensive of Judah's danger. 2. Anxious for Judah's salvation. 3. Awake to Judah's help. God did not, does not, wait till entreated to act for imperilled sinners' good: He "rises early," ere men realise peril, and "seeks to save."

II. Zealous effort. Solicitude does not remain passive: *rises* and *calls*. 1. *God is astir when efforts are made for human weal:* "Rising up." 2. *God works at most auspicious hours:* "Early;" while opportunity is yet before the sinner, and when his heart is most open to sacred influences. 3. *God Himself speaks to man by those He sends:* "I spake." He is too concerned individually in man's welfare to stand apart from endeavouring to rescue and help.

III. Incessant ministries. "Rising up early and speaking," a metaphor for ceaseless vigilance and endeavour. (Comp. xxv. 4, xxvi. 5, xxix. 19.) 1. *Abundantly.* 2. *Assiduously.* 3. *Continuously.*

IV. Pleading appeals. God's *messages* were characterised by the same qualities as His *efforts;* they were earnest and fervent also. 1. *Direct* in their aim: "Spake *to you.*" 2. *Diverse* in their tone: "I *spake,*" with quiet solemnity; "I *called,* with urgent importunity.

V. Barren results. "Ye heard not, ye answered not." 1. *Heedlessness of the heavenly word.* 2. *Resistance of Divine importunity.* 3. *Abuse of "the abundant grace."* 4. *Provocative of merited wrath* (ver. 14). When *speaking* is fruitless, God *acts:* "Therefore will I *do,*" &c.

> "God is earnest, do not stay:
> Thou may'st perish e'en to-day."

Ver. 15. *Theme:* RUINED NATIONALITIES.

How do Jehovah's *majesty* and *might* stand out upon our thought when we see Him dealing thus with whole nations! What magnitude! To Him the "nations are but as a drop in the bucket:" it awes and solemnises us to see God lifting up an entire kingdom, "Ephraim," and "casting it out of sight," from their land and their God; and now declaring He will do similarly with Judah. Who will not fear before Him?

"All *your brethren:*" whose were the covenants, and promises, and fathers, as much as they are yours; yet their sacred ancestry and privileges afforded them no protection.

"*The whole seed of Ephraim:*" *i.e.*, the ten tribes; superior, therefore, in numbers, resources for defence, and power of resistance. Yet all proved worthless when God's disfavour was incurred. Profaned places and profane people God abhors and will reject.

I. There is comprehensive breadth in God's proceedings. Moves with majestic tread, controls great nations with His will, determines the fate of empires with a word. Greater still: He "loved *the world,*" and will judge "*all peoples and nations.*"

II. There is appalling magnitude in God's overthrows. The whole ten tribes

outcast from Him: now Judah to be swept away in contempt! For "casting out" is an act of contempt as well as violence. What mighty empires are wrecks! Great Babylon, Nineveh, Rome, God stamped them into dust.

III. There is solemn forewarning in God's judgments. God proceeds uniformly in the administrations of His justice. What He did to Israel for her "wickedness," He will do also for Judah if her cause of condemnation be equal (ver. 14). The experiences of others stand as an admonition and a warning. Like sins incur like sentences (Luke xiii. 2–5).

Ver. 16. *Theme:* INTERCESSORY PRAYER FORBIDDEN.

Jeremiah did sometimes check himself in uttering direful prophecies, and betake himself to passionate and mournful prayer; stopped short, as it were, God's word of doom to man, and interposed man's word of pleading to God. (Comp. xiv. 7–9, 19–22, xviii. 20.) What preacher has not likewise interrupted proclamation with invocation? Who, that carries dark tidings, has not paused first near God in the anguish of prayer? *Pity, patriotism, piety,* all conspire often to drive the prophet from his feet to his knees (comp. 1 Sam. xii. 23.) (Addenda to chap. vii., "*Intercessory prayer.*")

I. A specification of the varied aspects of prayer.

General petitions: "Pray." *Supplicatory entreaty* (with loud voice and pathos): "Lift up cry." *Importunate pleading:* "Make intercession."

[There are *three* things forbidden. Be not *an intercessor* (*i.e.*, undertake not their cause as one who mediates between a judge and a criminal); nor a *deprecator of evils* (*i.e.*, lamenting their woes, and crying suppliantly for mercy); nor a *solicitor of favours* (*i.e.*, entreating Me to deal graciously with them). Interceding mercy, lamenting evils, entreating favours.—*Ed. of Calvin.*]

II. The power of earnest prayer Divinely acknowledged. He bids Jeremiah restrain it, refrain from it. It would stand in God's way as a barrier, a hindrance. Thus with Moses (Exod. xxxii. 10). "Let Me alone!" pleads God. The Almighty is both *restrained* and *constrained* by "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" (Num. xi. 2, xiv. 13–20, xvi. 22).

III. Prevailing intercessory prayer is dependent on conditions.

1. *The state of the people must be remediable.* 2. *The hour of hope must not have been lost.* When Moses *prevailed* the people were but stepping into the Theocracy; they sinned, but it was through lack of training and knowledge. Now they had known all inducements to godliness, nothing more could be done to keep them right; God had exhausted His resources of persuasion upon them. In this condition neither the intercession of Moses, Samuel, or Jeremiah could avail for them (see chap. xv. 1). Their day of grace was gone. (See also John v. 16.)

IV. No prayerful outcry may interpose to stay God's imperative justice. And now their case demanded retribution, for every persuasive had been abused. The Intercessor could plead, "Let be this year also!" and was heard, because there were yet other remediable processes availing; "Till I dig about it," &c. But if after that it continued fruitless, "Cut it down!" This was Judah's case.

"God here forbids prayer for them, for they have *sinned unto death*, therefore, pray not for their life, the life of their souls (1 John v. 16). See here: 1. *That God's prophets are praying men.* 2. That God's *praying prophets have a great interest in heaven*, how little soever they have on earth. 3. It is *an ill omen to a people when* God restrains the spirits of His ministers and people from praying for those condemned. 4. Those that will *not regard good ministers' preaching cannot expect any benefit by their praying.* If you will not hear us *when we speak from God to you*, God will not hear us when we speak *to Him for you.*"—*Henry.*

Ver. 17, 18. *Theme:* UNABASHED APOSTASY.

Not hidden from gaze, but in open streets, shameless! Though Jehovah's

temple rose in dignity before their eyes, and even threw its colossal shadow across the streets where they practised their idolatries, they were not restrained, "neither could they blush."

I. Religious devotion the secret of general and tireless activities. Though erroneous, nevertheless it impels to service and sacrifice as nothing else can do. Much more should it inspire diligence when true. All hands to the work. And "both hands earnestly," for much to be done.

1. *Enlists all ages and sexes.* 2. *Incites each to appropriate effort.* 3. *Combination in service effects speedy results and sure success.*

II. Noble energies lavished upon ignoble superstitions.

For what end was all this? Alas! look out upon *heathen scenes*, where devotees squander years, treasures, life; and for what? Look also on votaries of pleasure, pursuers of wealth, &c.; the eager lives with which modern *civilised society* is full; for what end do men live and labour?

III. Prostituted homage awakens the indignation of God. For here it was not done in ignorance, but wantonly and wilfully.

1. *Perversion of the true aim and design of man's being.* God made man for Himself—a jealous God. 2. *Ignores God's claim on human service, loyalty, and love.* He merited their trust and devotion. 3. *Enslaves men's soul in ruinous vices.* "O Israel! destroyed thyself." 4. *Provoking Heaven's wrath by despising His love.* Deliberate design, "that they may provoke," &c. What a reversion of our true *relation* to God, and our *experience* at His hand; for "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Ver. 19. *Theme:* REFLEX CONSEQUENCES OF SIN.

They harmed themselves more than God (*cf.* Deut. xxxii. 16, 21; Job xxxv. 6, 8; Prov. viii. 23): for

i. *They forfeited present consolation and assurance.* "There is no place to the wicked."

ii. *They entailed future confusion and calamity.* Shame would come, and with it ruin.

Ver. 21. *Theme:* SACRIFICES CONTEMNED AND COUNTERMANDED.

"*Put your burnt-offerings*," &c. *I* will not accept them. Take away your burnt-offerings which ye are about to lay upon Mine altar as a whole burnt-sacrifice to Me. I will have none of them (comp. vi. 20); put them on your own tables, and eat them yourselves. They are not burnt-offerings, holy to God, but are mere flesh, to be eaten by men. So our Lord said to the Jews concerning the temple, "*Your* house" (it is no longer *God's*, for ye have profaned it by your sins, and therefore He has forsaken it) "is left unto *you* desolate."—*Wordsworth.*

Ver. 22. "I SPAKE NOT CONCERNING SACRIFICES."

The apparent contradiction between this statement and the fact that the Mosaic institutes abound in sacrificial enactments may be removed in two ways:

i. *That moral obligation was inculcated upon the Hebrews before the sacrificial code* (*cf.* Exod. xv. 26, xix. 5). Then follows the proclamation of the moral code, amidst all the solemnities of Sinai. Not till *afterwards* were regulations given respecting sacrifices, which properly belonged to the Levitical law. Hence God reminds them here, "I spake not *in the day* that I brought them out of Egypt."

ii. It is not unusual for the Hebrews to *express in absolute terms what is to be understood relatively and comparatively.* Thus "to hate," = to *love less* (Gen. xxix. 30, 31; Mal. i. 2, 3). According to this idiom the meaning will be: That ritual observances were regarded by God as matters of secondary importance (see Luke xiv. 26; Matt. x. 37; Hos. vi. 6; 1 Sam. xv. 22); and that when these are substituted for moral duties and supreme love to Himself, God retorts with merited reprobation (comp. *Hend.*). Similarly our Lord states *negatively* what was of *inferior import-*

ance; "Labour *not* for the meat which perisheth; but for that which endureth" (John vi. 27).

Calvin thinks "Jeremiah seems to speak too contemptibly of sacrifices; for they were seals of God's grace, and had been instituted to lead men to repentance of sin, and to realise they merited the death which the victim endured. But it is true that God commanded nothing respecting mere sacrifices *for their own sake;* it was never His will to be served with mere external rites; His *design* in instituting them was to remind the Jews of their sin, and also to show to them the way of reconciliation."

Venema suggests that there is a repudiation of sacrifices as the *basis of God's covenant with His people.* Obedience and not sacrifice was the condition of this sacred relationship. God did not say, "If you sacrifice to Me, I will be your God;" but, "If you obey My voice, I will be your God and you shall be My people."

Evidently the antithesis, "*Not* concerning sacrifice. . . . But this thing, *Obey!*"—points to the basis and terms of the *Sinaitic covenant;* and what is here affirmed is, that when that covenant was made and entered into, *obedience* was the supreme and essential factor in that covenant. To withhold obedience, therefore, and to substitute mere sacrifice, was to withhold that on which the continuance of God's covenant relationship absolutely depended. In Amos v. 25, God reminds them that for forty years He dispensed altogether with sacrifices, *ergo,* they could not be of primary importance.

Note: *Hitzig, Graf,* and others find in this passage proof that *Jeremiah was ignorant of that part of the Pentateuch which contains sacrificial enactments;* "that at his time nothing was known of the legislation on sacrifice given by God on Sinai." This gives them an argument for denying that Moses was the author of the middle books of the Pentateuch, and for ascribing their authorship to Ezra. But this is manifestly a "wresting the Scriptures." No canon of criticism can sustain such an interpretation of these words. They do not deny the Divine authority of sacrifices, but assign to them a subservient place. (Addenda to chap. vii., "*Sacrifices.*")

Ver. 22, 23. *Theme:* SACRIFICES SUBSTITUTED FOR OBEDIENCE.

An external piety offered to God, while righteousness and true holiness are withheld.

I. Men are constantly adopting expedients by which to evade obedience. *Obedience* entails self-conquest, and daily service, and a surrendered life; *sacrifice,* on the contrary, is soon offered, and costs less. 1. *An easier offering.* 2. *A shorter process.* 3. *A smaller surrender.*

II. God prefers an obedient life to any sacrificial oblation.

Obedience is preferable to sacrifice: 1. As denoting *a better spirit.* 2. As involving *a fuller compliance.* 3. As containing *a gentler law*—not suffering, but service. "For I desired mercy, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." "And to love Him with all the understanding, &c., is *more than all whole burnt-offering and sacrifice.* Jesus saw that he *answered discreetly,* and said, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God!"

Ver. 24. God had commanded them (ver. 23), "Walk ye in all the way," &c.; but instead, they "walked in the counsels and in the imaginations (properly, *stubbornness*) of their evil heart." (See on chap. iii. 17.) The result was: they *moved in a totally opposite direction* from that in which God designed. Note: *God's way* for us is not merely *deserted,* but positively *reversed,* when we follow *our own way.* (Comp. Isa. liii. 6; Heb. iii. 12.) To pursue our "counsels" we have to turn our back upon both God and His commands.

Theme: BACKWARD.

On going backward in regard to the great matter of practical religion.

I. Illustrations of going backward in regard to religion.

An advanced state of religious knowledge, of moral purity, of spiritual power may be attained, from which men may go backward. Illustrations:

1. *From the history of the Jewish nation.* Compare best days of Solomon, when temple was dedicated, with these when Jeremiah preached at gate. National *mind darkened, conscience enfeebled, heart hardened.* People gone backward in Divine knowledge, moral rectitude, devout feeling (Isa. i. 3, 4, 21–23).

2. *Churches* may go backward—*e.g.*, *Galatia* (Gal. iii. 1–3, v. 7, 8), *Ephesus* (Rev. ii. 4), *Sardis* (Rev. iii. 1).

3. *Individual life* furnishes saddest illustrations. (*a.*) Brought up in Christian home; go back into thoughtlessness, dissipation, and infidelity. (*b.*) Awakened by the power of truth, and gained a place in the household of faith; go backward and "make shipwreck of faith and good conscience. (*c.*) Trod noblest heights of Christian service; go backward to stagnation and ease. "Demas hath forsaken," &c. (2. Tim. iv. 10).

II. Consider, for conviction and warning, some of the causes of this going backward. Negatively: (1.) *God never causes a human being to go backward* from what is pure and good and true. (2.) Nor must the charge be laid at the door of *men* or of *Satan.* 1. The *primary cause of retrogression* must be sought in man himself, in his *inclination* to the things which are behind; in *spiritual feebleness.* 2. The *secondary causes* are temptations; the lusts, pleasures, and gains he desires to enjoy. 3. His *weakness in yielding results from neglect of the means of strength,* the Word of God, prayer, means of instruction and grace.

III. Contemplate some consequences of going backward in regard to religion. Jewish history full of records of *misery, affliction, desolation, conquest, captivity,* which resulted from apostasy. But what are the consequences of apostasy from Christian profession and life? 1. *The displeasure of the great God* (Heb. x. 38). 2. Such as turn back are liable to *sink into the very lowest depths of irreligion* (2 Pet. ii. 20–22). 3. *Experience of deepest remorse and reproach of conscience.*

(1.) Stand fast in the Lord. (2.) Despair not, but return.—*Rev. R. Ann, "Christian World Pulpit."*

Ver. 24–29. *Theme:* DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD.

I. Its cause. 1. Not *neglect on God's part to make known* His Word to men (ver. 25). 2. Not the *imperfect performance by the preacher* of his duties (ver. 27); but, 3. *The hardness of men's hearts;* who (*a.*) walk after their evil imaginations and counsels (ver. 24); (*b.*) do not hear or believe (ver. 28), and do not wish to improve (ver. 26).

II. Its consequences. 1. *Increasing moral corruption* (ver. 24, 26). 2. *Rejection on the part of God* (ver. 29). —*Naeg.*

Ver. 25–28. *Theme:* SAD CHARACTERISTICS OF AN UNBELIEVING EPOCH.

i. *Contempt of the preaching of the Divine Word.*

ii. *Stiff-neckedness in respect to the visitations of Divine chastisements.*

iii. *Increase of wickedness in spite of all the warnings of the past.—From Lange.*

Theme: A PEOPLE RIPE FOR DESTRUCTION. When?

i. When it *despises the visitations of Divine grace* (ver. 25).

ii. When it *hardens itself in unbelief* against God's Word and voice (ver. 26, 27).

iii. When in spite of Divine judgments it *departs the more into sin* (ver. 26, 28).—*Idem.*

Theme: ISRAEL A WARNING EXAMPLE OF PREVAILING UNBELIEF.

Their example is admonitory to us in our own times.

i. With respect to *their ingratitude* for God's gracious visitations.

ii. With respect to *their opposition* to the true friends of the nation.

iii. With respect to *their frivolity* in view of inevitable destruction.—*Idem.*

Ver. 27. *Theme:* GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE SINNER'S REFUSAL OF HIS WORD.

The infinitely perfect God knows all things. Ignorance incompatible with His originating and governing power. This true not only of material things, but of mind, thoughts, and actions of all His intelligent and moral creatures.

So that all we freely do is known to Him, and His government is adapted to all such creatures. Jeremiah is to tell Judah God's will, make known His Word; yet it is added, "They will not hearken." We understand their condition as described ver. 23, 24; Ezek. ii. 7. But there is a peculiarity in telling them, and yet knowing they will not regard.

I. Seek for instances illustrative of text, where God knew His Word would not be regarded, nor His messages answered.

1. *The original transgression of our first parents.* God's Word clear, easy, distinct; yet He knew how they would act; saw hearts.

2. *The old world.* He saw rise of evil and progress; yet Noah preached 120 years, built ark; Spirit strove.

3. *Pharaoh.* Moses and Aaron are sent, miracles wrought, God's messages proclaimed, demands enforced; yet He knew Pharaoh would harden his heart and sin to his destruction.

4. *Jews as a nation.* How prophets and holy men went to them. John also and Christ Yet God knew their unbelief and cruelty. Christ referred to this in His own ministry; He declared their obstinacy and ruin. So that text is but one of many cases in Word of God.

II. How can this be explained and defended? Unless God did know results such as described:

1. *He would be imperfect;* not the all-wise, infallible God, and He could not govern His world. But His perfect knowledge of the future

2. Does not make Him *the cause* of the rebellion He foretells. He does not predestinate it, but foreknows it. Just as He foreknew Noah's sin, yet did not make him drunk; murder of Abel, yet did not impel Cain to the deed, &c. The astronomer by calculation foreknows every visible and invisible eclipse of the year, but *does not produce them.*

3. *He never influences men to do wrong* because He foresees it (Acts ii. 23). Though God designed His Son to be a Saviour, and hence a sacrifice, and foresaw the conduct of the Jews, they freely and wickedly crucified Him.

4. *There are many ends to be attained by God.* By His speaking, though He knows men will not hearken:

(*a.*) God exhibits His true desire for their salvation. He truly, earnestly calls. (*b.*) He thereby treats men as reasonable and responsible beings. (*c.*) He thus leaves them without excuse. "I called, but ye refused," &c.

Conclusion: (1.) Man's free agency is his glory. (2.) God's infinite goodness is undoubted. (3.) Our duty is most manifest; to hear, obey, believe. (4.) Thus men will be finally inexcusable, having had means employed for their restoration to holiness and God.—*J. Burnes, D.D.*

Comments.

"*But they will not hearken unto thee.*" Howbeit, speak—"whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear"—for a testimony against them.—*Trapp.*

"It was a most *grievous trial to the prophet* to know that his words would pass away with the air and produce no good. His mind must have been greatly depressed; for he doubtless laboured for the good of his own nation. Yet his sympathy and sorrow (for he loved his nation and felt great grief in declaring God's coming judgments) did not prevent him from executing in a bold manner and with unshaken zeal what God had committed to him. . . . God then declares to his servant what would be the issue, in order that he might not cease to execute his office with invincible courage, even if no fruit appeared."—*Calvin.*

Ver. 28. "*This is a nation that obeyeth not,*" &c. Rather, This is *the* nation. "Israel occupies so unique a position among all nations that for it to disobey God is marvellous. (See Isa. i. 3; Jer. li. 11.)"—*Speaker's Com.*

The prophet is not here bidden to address the Jews, but to *pronounce on them a sentence,* that the whole world might know how base and detestable had been their contumacy, and how abominable their impiety.—*Calvin.*

"*Truth* is perished." The ancient versions and the *Targum* render אֱמוּנָה (truth) by πίστις, *fides,* faith or fidelity.

(See on chap. v. 3.) Their conduct was utterly perfidious toward man as well as God.

"Is cut off *from their mouth*"—*i.e.*, their language has become wholly insincere, mere mockery, profession without intention; their lips flippantly used Jehovah's name, and could "swear by Him" (chap. v. 2); but duplicity, falsity, was their settled habit in speech as in practice. No "truth" remained in either their word or deed.

Ver. 29. *Comments.*

"*Cut off thine hair.*" The word rendered "hair" is *nêzer*, and signifies a *crown*. From it the *Nazarites* obtained their name, for their hair was the badge of their consecration to God, their crown (Num. vi. 5, 7). *Cutting off* this hair was equivalent to abandonment of the consecrated character. Her profanation entailed the loss of her crown (comp. Lam. v. 16); her dignity, as well as her adornment and beauty (1 Cor. xi. 15) were forfeit.

Neumann would retain the literal interpretation of the word, and regard the command as implying the abandonment by Judah of national dignity, the *total forfeiture of the crown;* for her royalty, the kingly office, was lost entirely to the nation in the Babylonish captivity, never again restored.

Ver. 29–34. Here is

I. A loud call to weeping and mourning (ver. 29). Jerusalem had been—1. *A joyous city;* now she must "take up lamentation." 2. *A consecrated city;* now she must "cut off her hair," in token both of sorrow and slavery; she must be degraded, separated *from* God, as she had been separated *to* Him. It is time for those who have lost their holiness to lay aside their joy.

II. Just cause given for this great lamentation.

1. *The sin of Jerusalem* appears here *very heinous* (ver. 30). Two things charged upon them in their idolatry: (*a.*) They were very *impudent* in it *towards God*, and set Him at defiance (ver. 30). (*b.*) They were very *barbarous* in it towards their own *children* (ver. 31). (Addenda to chap. vii. 31, "*High places of Tophet.*")

2. *The destruction of Jerusalem* appears here *very terrible.* General misery (ver. 29). Sin makes those the "generation of God's wrath" who had been the generation of His love. He disowns them. And He will give them up to the terrors of their own guilt. (*a.*) *Death shall triumph over them* (ver. 32, 33). So great shall be the slaughter that even the spacious valley of Tophet shall not be able to contain the slain. (*b.*) *Joy shall depart from them* (ver. 34). God can soon mar the mirth of the most jovial, and make it to cease; which is a reason why we should "rejoice with trembling" (with *reverence*).—*Henry.*

Ver. 30. "*They have set their abominations in the house.*" So do those now that broach heresies in the Church.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 31. *Theme:* SINFULNESS OF WILL-WORSHIP. "*Which I commanded them not.*"

Hence it is justly concluded that i. To *add* anything to God's Word (as of necessity to salvation), and to *enforce* it as an *article of saving faith;* and ii. To propose anything as an object of *worship* which God has not authorised, is hateful in His sight. Here, therefore, is a solemn protest against the *worship* of the *Virgin Mary*, the *invocation of saints and angels*, and other like acts of "will-worship" (Col. ii. 23), as *prayers for the dead.* What is not "commanded" in Scripture is, therefore, *forbidden* as an object of worship.—*Wordsworth.*

"The purpose of God was to teach His people both unto *whom* they should offer sacrifice, and *what* sacrifice was to be offered. To burn their sons in fire unto Baal He did *not command* them; He spake *no such thing, neither came it into His mind;* therefore this they ought not to have done. The prophet chooses rather to charge them with the *fault* of making *a law unto themselves*, than with the crime of transgressing a law which God made. For when the Lord hath once Himself precisely set down a form of executing that wherein we are to serve Him, the fault appeareth

greater *to do* that which *we are not*, than not to do that which we are, *commanded*." — *Hooker*, "*Eccles. Pol.*," *quoted in Wordsworth.*

On creating objects of superstitious homage.

"God here cuts off from men every occasion for evasions, since He condemns by this one phrase, 'I have not commanded them,' whatever the Jews *devised*. There is, then, no other argument needed to *condemn superstitions* than that they are *not commanded* by God; for when men allow themselves to worship God according to their own fancies, and attend not to His commands, they pervert true religion. And if this principle were adopted by the Papists, all those fictitious modes of worship in which they absurdly exercise themselves would fall to the ground. When God says that '*it never came into His mind*,' He suggests that men *assume too much wisdom* when they devise what He never required—nay, what He never knew."—*Calvin.*

Ver. 30–34.

i. **Sacrilege** (ver. 30), and ii. **Superstitions** (ver. 31), would entail iii. **Slaughter** (ver. 32, 33) and iv. **Sorrow** (ver. 34); joy silenced, homes solitary, and the land spoiled. "The wages of sin is death." (Addenda to chap. vii. 32, "*Punishment.*")

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER VII.

Topic: THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH (ver. 3–7).

I. The Church externally. Fulfils beneficent purposes, administers external benefits. 1. What are her ministries? The Word, sacrament, &c. 2. How far are her external ministries essential? Romanism and Protestantism reply differently. 3. What reasons have we for guarding against danger? The Church may be overestimated (ver. 4).

II. The Church internally. Her true constitution and character are indicated. 1. It is essentially a community of saints and true believers (ver. 5–7). 2. Its existence is manifested—(*a.*) In the holy walk of its members (ver. 3, 5, 6). (*b.*) In the blessings of the Divine presence (ver. 3, 7).—*Naeg.*

Topic: EXTERNAL ECCLESIASTICISM (ver. 8–15).

An earnest warning against mere outward adherence to, and trust in, church ordinances and services, unaccompanied by practical piety and heart religion.

I. Its essence. 1. False confidence in church testimony (ver. 8). 2. Delusive trust in the unconditional saving efficacy of sanctuary rites (ver. 10).

II. Its consequences. 1. Demoralisation (ver. 9, 10). 2 Desecration of the holy (ver. 11). 3. Destruction of the offenders (ver. 12–15).—*Idem.*

Topic: ABUSE OF RELIGION: IMMORALITY JUSTIFIED BY TEMPLE OBSERVANCES (ver. 9, 10).

Nothing more usual among hypocrites than to mingle and confound in their lives what is commendable and what is sinful—virtue and vice—palliating their wickedness with some pretences and appearance of goodness. Here they attended upon the ordinances of the temple, and from them drew a licence to sinful courses, crying, "The temple of the Lord," &c. (ver. 4).

I. **Their abominable hypocrisy.** Consisting in their *profaneness*, in "theft, murder," &c. (ver. 9); and their *formality*, in "coming and standing before God in His house." These words may be taken in a sense

i. *Absolutely and positively.* This question, Will ye steal, &c., has included in it an *assertion*, ye do so; and an *accusation*, for by God's direction Jeremiah charged upon this people their guilt in these respects. Regard this profaneness and formality as meeting in the same persons. 1. *Their consistency:* they *may* go

together, it is possible. Men may "steal," &c., and yet "come before God in His house;" and men may "stand before God," &c., and yet be guilty of such crimes. The *reason* is, that bare *external works of religion* have no changing or improving influence upon *the heart*. On the other side, *corrupt affections*, which tend to such wicked practices, do not restrain men from *external performance* of religious duties. It is no impediment to wrong-doing now and then to go to church; yea, frequenting ordinances may give licence to lust. 2. *Their concomitancy;* they *do* go together. No rare business for profane men to be at the duties of religion. There is *double ground* for it. (*a.*) To *blind the eyes of men*. (*b.*) To *stop the mouth of conscience*. Ah this shows a sad and miserable condition. Its relevancy to *Popery*, which encourages outward attendance upon ordinances, yet lets loose "the lusts which war against the soul."

ii. *Interrogatively and expostulatory*. "Will ye steal, . . . and come and stand," &c.? The Lord calls this people to an account for this admixture of profaneness and formality. This expostulation has a double emphasis with it.

1. *How can ye do so* in regard of *yourselves?* How satisfy your minds and consciences with such kind of doings? God appeals to their own *judgment*, can ye think it fitting? This is the great unhappiness of hypocrites and formalists, they are condemned of themselves. Their actions were *incongruous* and *repugnant*.

2. *How can ye do so* in regard of *Me?* Can ye think to please *Me* by such ways? The Lord thus not only argues with them, but reproves them. (*a.*) He *taxes them for their formality* in that they thought to propitiate Him by their bare external performances. He *requires* external duties of religion; their *actions* in this respect were good, but their *affections* were bad (comp. Isa. xxix. 13; Matt. xv. 8; Ezek xxxiii. 31). This was odious in God's sight, as a piece of *sacrilege*—robbing God of His due; of *dissimulation*—pretends to worship, but denies God the frame of his heart, although "He desires truth in the inward parts;" and it is *unprofitable*—neither bettering the heart, nor restraining from evil practices. (*b.*) *He taxes them for their presumption*, in that they durst approach Him in their sinful indulgence (comp. Isa. i. 11, 12, lvi. 3, Ps. l. 16, 17; Lev. x. 3). Here is an *aggravation of their sinfulness*; for there is a *tre passing upon God in His majesty*—to come before Him in such vile habits showed they did not much regard Him; and there is a *suspicion of God in His wisdom*—they think He will not see or take notice of their vileness, and assay to flatter Him by some fair pretences. Also, here is an *intimation of their greater danger*. Will ye do it? Dare ye be so bold? Do ye consider the hazard ye run? There are *three sorts of judgments* which are commonly consequent upon such daringly guilty conduct: *Spiritual*—become more hardened and confirmed, increase their corruptions; *Temporal*—He inflicts grievous calamity on such, of which Scripture supplies instances: *Eternal*—the vengeance of everlasting destruction; "hypocrites have their portion in the lake," &c. The greater sin has always the greater danger.

II. **Their notorious stupidity**. "And say, We are delivered to do all these abominations!" Different translations. The *Septuagint* (and Arabic) read the words thus: We *have withdrawn or abstained from all*, &c., *i.e.*, they impudently deny their manifest wickedness. The *Syriac* thus: *Deliver us, because we have abstained*, &c.; more impudent still, not only to deny their notorious guilt, but also plead innocency as meritorious of preservation. But there are other translations specially to attend to. The *Chaldee* paraphrase (with which agrees the *Geneva* and *Old English* translation): "*We are delivered, though*," &c. The rendering of *St. Jerome* and the Vulgate: "*We are delivered, because*," &c. The *authorised English version*: "*We are delivered, that we may*," &c., *i.e.*, it is lawful to commit, &c.

1. Their *security* and insensibleness of their present condition in regard of sin: "We are delivered, *though* we commit, &c.; making their iniquities no hindrance to their preservation, as in Isa. xxviii. 15. There is a various ground for this carnal security: (*a.*) A false conceit in them of the *mercy and indulgency of God*

(Ps. ix. 7). (*b.*) A freedom and preservation from judgment and punishment *at the present.* "We *are* delivered, and therefore *shall be*" (Eccles. viii. 11). (*c.*) *Carnal refuges and reliances;* they think it impossible they will be punished; and the Lord in this expostulation, Do ye say so? implies, Ye are *mistaken* in saying so.

2. Their *stupidity;* according to the reading, "We are delivered, *because,*" &c. Thinking that not only shall they receive no hurt in their sins, but that they shall have good for them; that the more they abound in abominations, the more they shall abound in deliverances (comp. Jer. xliv. 17). Our iniquities are advantageous to us!

3. Their *incorrigibleness and persistency,* or their ingratitude and perverse improvement of God's deliverances and preservations of them: "*We are delivered to commit them,*" *i.e.,* as an opportunity for the more free commission of them. As if God had delivered them on purpose that they might "continue in sin." This is met by the *remonstrance* of the text: "Will ye say so?" What a fearful thing is this! Such a mood calls for heaviest judgments, for they are the worst of sinners: *means are perverted* and *mercy is abused;* they are not bettered by God's spiritual physic, and His "goodness," which should "lead to repentance," is turned into an occasion of wantonness. God will surely bring His dire woes on such, and make them at last and effectually to know that they are not "delivered to commit all these abominations."—*Th. Horton, D.D.,* A.D. 1678.

Topic: WHAT CAN CHILDREN DO FOR GOD? (*Children's Sermon*): "*The children gathered wood*" (ver. 18).

A description here of honours which heathen pay to their gods. Though these idols were such stupid things, every one works for them. Should not, therefore, every one do work for our God? He is better than idols; and had done for us great things; and for such a God you ought to work.

I. God is setting up a kingdom in this world. A very glorious and gracious kingdom: "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." *Righteousness*—teaches us to do justice; *peace*—to love peace and pursue it; *joy*—God makes all happy who come into His kingdom.

II. God expects us all to work to set up this kingdom. Christ came to set it up; ministers preach and labour for it; missionaries go to heathen; all God's people aid. Every one has something to do; and God expects each should do it.

III. Children can do something to set up this kingdom. The children did something when Christ rode into Jerusalem; "spread garments" and cried "Hosanna!" 1. You can *pray;* that God would make you subjects of this kingdom. 2. You can *talk;* speak to others about Jesus, pardon, God, heaven. 3. You can *work;* give to missionary society, deny yourselves to send Bibles to heathen.

IV. Children are always happy when trying to set up this kingdom. Why? Because make others happy. Angels are happy because they are employed in making others happy. God is happy, for He blesses every one. And, when we act like God, we ourselves are happy.

V. God will never forget the labours of little children for Him. When children wanted to come to Jesus, He noticed their disposition, and said, "Never prevent a child from coming to Me!" then took in arms and blessed. When they sang in temple, He noticed their song, and said, "Hearest thou what these say?" Josiah was only eight years old when he became king; and, because he was a good boy, it is put down in the Book of God that he gave money to the priests to build God's house, and did everything in his power to serve God. God loves everything done for Him by children, because it is a proof of their obedience and love. May He give you His Holy Spirit and bless you, make you willing to

labour for Christ now, that have His approval when you die, and dwell with Him in heaven.—*James Sherman*, A.D. 1844.

Topic: SACRED OVERTHROWS; MONUMENTAL WARNINGS. "*See what I did to Shiloh*" (ver. 12).

The world is full of historic overthrows: Nineveh, Babylon, Rome, Herculaneum; each with an admonitory lesson—that its peculiar guiltiness evokes Heaven's curse. But even *holy edifices* are among the ruins; though sanctioned both by antiquity and Divine authority. Sin shakes the strongest foundation, and the structure falls. Confidence in the inalienable *sacredness* and therefore *security* of a place is a delusion against which the ruins of holy scenes admonish us. Sacredness does give security; but if the former is lost, the latter is forfeit. *Henry* remarks:

I. **Shiloh was ruined, though it had God's sanctuary in it**, when by wickedness it profaned that sanctuary. There God "set His name at the first" (Josh. xviii. 1); but sin arose. Was it protected by its having the tabernacle? God forsook it (Ps. lxxviii. 60); and we read of the city afterwards only as a monument of Divine vengeance upon holy places when they harbour wicked people. It is good to consult precedents and make use of them. "Remember Lot's wife;" remember Shiloh, and seven Churches of Asia; and know that the ark and candlestick are movable things (Rev. ii. 5; Matt. xxi. 43).

II. **Shiloh's fate would be Jerusalem's doom**, unless speedy and sincere repentance prevent it not. 1. *Jerusalem was as sinful as ever Shiloh was* (ver. 13). 2. *Jerusalem should be as miserable as ever Shiloh was* (ver. 14).

"The tabernacle and the sanctuary at Shiloh have disappeared; so also the temple built by Solomon, and the Ark of the Covenant itself; and even the temple re-erected without the ark by Zerubbabel; so too the temple of Herod. All the places consecrated by the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and the ministry of His apostles have been destroyed, and given up to the abomination of desolation: Jerusalem, with the Mount of Olives and Golgotha, Bethlehem, Nazareth, the whole of Palestine, Asia Minor and Greece, became Christian, and yet fell a prey to the Crescent. All the less may Rome count on perpetuity, since the chair of Peter rests not on Divine, but on arbitrary human institution."—*Naeg.*

ADDENDA TO CHAP. VII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 4. "*Proclaim there this word.*" **The preacher.**

"He that negotiates between God and man,
As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful
To court a grin when you should woo a soul:
To break a jest when pity should inspire
Pathetic exhortation; and address
The skittish fancies with facetious tales
When sent with God's commission to the heart."
—COWPER.

Ver. 4. "*The temple of the Lord!*" **Ecclesiasticism.** "They clung with a desperate tenacity to the hope that the local sanctity of Jerusalem was a sufficient safeguard against all calamities; and repeated, with that energy of iteration which only belongs to Eastern fanatics, the very name of the temple of Jehovah as an all-sufficing talisman."—*Stanley*, "*Jewish Church.*"

"It is much easier to give oneself to a church or a sect than to God."—*Toplady.*

"Men seem to think, Only let me get into the Church that has apostolicity, and catholicity, and orthodoxy! . . . An organised institution I believe in; but the New Testament idea of a Church was a moral society of those who had a common faith, hope and love. That Church which is most positive about its apostolicity, that thinks there is no other Church but itself in the world, is a mere crustaceous, not a spiritual, Church. And that Church which has the most altars, the most vestments, the most externali-

ties, the most things that appeal to the lower nature of men, which has the most physical embodiment, and therefore occupies the largest space in men's sight, is farthest from the true spiritual Church."—*Beecher.*

Ver. 5. Thoroughness. "I have tried for twenty years to be a half-way Christian," said a business man on whom life's cares pressed heavily, and over whom worldly allurements were very powerful, "and find it is impossible; we must be at one or the other extreme. And as for myself, I am determined to do my whole duty, and be a complete Christian."

A proud Indian chief became deeply convicted of sin, and, trembling under a sense of guilt, sought the missionary, and proffered his belt of wampum to be freed from his anguish of fear. "No," said the missionary, "Christ cannot accept such a sacrifice." The Indian departed, but soon returned offering his rifle and the skins he had taken in hunting. "No," was the reply, "Christ cannot accept such a sacrifice." Again the Indian went away, but with a troubled conscience once more returned, and offered his wigwam, wife, child, everything, for peace and pardon. "No," was still the reply, "Christ cannot accept such a sacrifice." The chief seemed oppressed with surprise for a moment; then, lifting up tearful eyes to heaven, he feelingly cried out, "Here, Lord, take poor Indian too!"—*Dictionary of Illustrations.*

"Place not thy amendment only in increasing thy devotion, but in bettering thy life. This is the damning hypocrisy of this age, that it slights all good morality and spends its zeal in matters of ceremony, and a form of godliness without the power of it."—*Fuller.*

Ver. 7. Covenant. "God's promises are with a condition, which is as an oar in a boat or stern of a ship, and turns the promise another way."—*Trapp.*

The two Rabbis. A little while after the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, two Jewish rabbis were walking over its ruins. Both seemed affected at the mournful sight, but one wept, the other smiled. Turning to his companion, the one asked, "How can you smile now, when you see our holy city laid low in ruins?" "Nay," replied the other, "let me rather ask you, Why do you weep?" "I weep," said the first, "because I behold around me the fearful judgments of the Almighty. Our beautiful city is no more—our holy temple is laid waste—our brethren, where are they now?" "All that," replied the other, "is the reason why I smile. I see, like you, how sure God's judgments are; but I can learn how true must be His promises. God hath said, 'I will destroy Jerusalem.' I see He has; but He has also said, 'I will rebuild Jerusalem.' Shall I not believe His word?"

Ver. 10. Insolent profanity. The very heathen refused to admit any polluted person to their religious services. That saying of Æneas to his father, when he came from the war, is a clear proof: *Tu genitor*, &c., "Father, do you meddle with the sacrifices; but as for me, it is a sinful thing to touch them till I have washed myself in the fountain." This was an outward external rite amongst them for cleansing themselves. These heathen cried out to the people that came to sacrifice, "All you that are unclean and profane, go far from these sacrifices." Not only the Word of God, but the very light of nature taught them not to meddle with holy things till they were sanctified.—*Caryl.*

In the mystical sacrifices of Ceres, profane persons were excluded, the priest calling out, ἐκας ἐκας ὅσις ἀλιτρος.

"I venerate the man whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrines and whose life,
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause."
—COWPER.

Ver. 11. Sacrilege. The spirit of God will not have holy things profaned. Belshazzar converted the consecrated vessels of the temple into instruments of luxury and intemperance. Herod polluted the sepulchres of saints by a sacrilegious search for treasures presumed to be hidden there, and God made fire to rise out of the earth and consume the searchers. Antiochus ransacked the

temple of the Lord. Heliodorus emptied the treasures of their consecrated monies. Pompey defiled the Sabbath and the sanctuary. Crassus robbed the house of God of 10,000 talents. But inquire into the event of these insolences, and we shall find that true then of which later ages give many examples, that ruin is the child of sacrilege, that mischief setteth a period to the lives and designs of profane men.—*Bishop Reynolds.*

Ver. 16. **Intercessory prayer.** Luther had boundless confidence in the power and prevalency of prayer. "At the time the Diet of Nuremberg was held," says Tholuck, "Luther was earnestly praying in his own dwelling; and at the very hour when the edict granting free toleration to all Protestants was issued, he ran out of his house, crying out, 'We have gained the victory! Do you understand that?'" On another occasion, Melancthon was sinking into death through severe illness, and Luther entered his chamber. "We cannot spare you yet!" was Luther's exclamation to his dying friend; and then he threw himself upon his knees in wrestling prayer. Then, seizing Melancthon's hand, he said, "Be of good courage, Philip: thou shalt not die!" After his recovery, Melancthon wrote to Camerarius, "If Luther had not come to me, I should certainly have died; he recalled me from the gates of the grave."

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day,"
&c. —TENNYSON'S "*Morte d'Arthur.*"

Ver. 22. **Sacrifices.** Christ never despised sacrifice, but relatively He undervalued it. The idea of sacrifice among the Jews had taken precedence of humanity, justice, and right. (See Matt. v. 23, 24.) What does it mean but this, Do not think that sacrifice to God is the highest religious duty. Sacrifice depends for its value on preceding moral qualities. A principle is higher than the ordinance which you take to exhibit that principle. The life of religion in the soul is first in importance: the instruments by which you develop that life are of secondary consideration.—*H. W. Beecher.*

Ver. 23. **Obedience.** Some persons would make religion to consist of little else than a self-denying course of the practice of virtue and obedience. They make it a kind of house-of-correction work. But no! I *love* the service of my God; like the bird, I fly on the wings of obedience to His holy will.—*Chalmers.*

Ver. 31. "*High places of Tophet.*" In the parallel passages (xix. 5, xxxii. 35), Jeremiah substitutes the word "Baal," thus identifying the two names. Probably "Tophet" was a contemptuous name for "Baal," derived from תּוּף, *to spit out*, an object, therefore, of loathing. The word occurs in Job xvii. 6, and is rendered "tabret," *i.e.*, "I was as a contemptuous thing." And it is to be noticed that in the consecutive verses (Isa. xxx. 32, 33) the word occurs twice, and is rendered "tabret" and "Tophet" respectively. Dr. W. Smith affirms that "the Hebrew words are nearly identical," and hence concludes that "Tophet was probably the king's 'music-grove' or garden, denoting originally nothing evil or hateful." But Ewald, Hitzig, Gesenius, and others, appeal to Isa. xxx. 33, "Fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it," in favour of the meaning, *place of burning*, from תָּף, *to burn*. This beautiful valley Josiah "defiled" (2 Kings xxiii. 10), pouring into it all the filth of the city, till it became a foul and revolting scene. Others suggest its significance to be "a drum," because that instrument was employed to drown the cries of victims who were "caused to pass through the fire." "To the worship of Molech a temple was dedicated in the valley of Hinnom, and infants sacrificed, to drown whose cries, when the little innocents were locked in the burning embraces of the brazen image, a loud flourish of trumpets and cymbals was constantly kept up, whence the place was called Tophet. Hezekiah and Manasseh, both slaves to this revolting superstition, immolated their sons to the savage divinity."—*Paxton.*

Ver. 32. Punishment. The seed holds in embryo the form into which, by an inviolable law, it will develop; the full development will be but an enlargement and likeness of the germ. Sin is thus embryonic; our guilty deeds will expand into results which will reflect in intensity their origin. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

"Punishment is the recoil of crime; and the strength of the back-stroke is in proportion to the original blow."—*French.*

CHAPTER VIII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—Chronology and History, as in chap. vii. Observe, however, that a new section in this extended prophetic address commenced with ver. 4, which continues to chap. ix. 22.

1. **Geographical Reference.** Ver. 22. "*Gilead:*" a mountainous region, bounded on the west by Jordan, east by high plateau of Arabia, north by Bashan, south by valley of Heshbon; covering an area of *cir.* 60 miles by 20. The mountains of Gilead have an elevation of between 2000 and 3000 feet. The valleys of Gilead are richly wooded, presenting all the noble features of forest scenery. The torrent-beds are filled with oleanders. The district so charmed the Reubenites and Gadites that they asked it for their inheritance rather than pass "over Jordan" (Num. xxxii. 1–5).

2. **Personal Allusions.** Ver. 8. "*Scribes:*" the Sopherim, students and interpreters of the written law, who probably owed their elevation into a distinctly-recognised order to Shaphan (2 Chron. xxxiv. 13, 15); their employ was to write out the law, classify its contents, enumerate its clauses and letters, with "every jot and tittle" (*cf.* ii. 8). Ver. 9. "*The wise men:*" specified also in chap. xviii. 18 as a distinct class; but probably here used of those who prided themselves on their knowledge, learned men of all orders of society (*cf.* ix. 23).

3. **Natural History.** Ver. 7. "*Stork:*" *Chasidah*, a name suggestive of piety and benevolence, from חֶסֶד, *zeal, benignity;* specially careful for her young and her aged parents, makes her nest on high (Ps. civ. 17), soars very loftily ("in the heaven"), far above the range of human vision, annually migrates as soon as cold warns her of winter's approach; arrives in Palestine about the middle of March, where it rests for about six weeks. "*Turtle,*" *i.e.*, turtle-dove, *Thor:* heralds the spring (Cant. ii. 12) with sweet voice (Cant. ii. 14), yet mournful tones (Nah. ii. 9); its plumage rich (Ps. lxviii. 13), nestles in rocks (Jer. xliii. 28), has eyes of peculiar softness and lustre (Cant. i. 15, v. 12), migratory. "*Crane:*" *Sus*, means the *swift*, also a bird of passage, very noisy, with a harsh note; in appearance resembling the stork. "*Swallow:*" here *Agûr* [the words *Sus* and *Agur* are used interchangeably in Scripture for swallow and crane; difficult, therefore, to fix the name on either]; the swallow prefers populous scenes, and builds her nest in dwellings of mankind; her note is quick and querulous (Isa. xxxviii. 14), her migration is annual. Ver. 13. "*Grapes on the vine:*" *Anabim*, cluster of grapes (Gen. xl. 10). (See notes on chap. ii. 21, vi. 9.) "*Figs:*" *Tenim*, three kinds in Palestine—the *early*, the *summer*, and the *winter* fig; tree grows to vast dimensions, and abounds throughout the land (Deut. viii. 8). (See notes on chap. v. 17.) Ver. 14. "*Water of gall,*" *i.e.*, poisonous water; lit. *water of the poisonous plant,* מֵי רֹאשׁ. *Gesenius* pronounces it the poppy; but *Speaker's Com.* refers to the same word in Deut. xxxii. 32, where the further description, "their grapes are grapes of gall," necessitates the abandonment of the poppy, which has no berries ("grapes"); and concludes, "probably it was the *belladonna* or nightshade, to *the berries* of which the grapes of Israel were compared." In Hos. x. 4, *rôsh* is rendered "hemlock," and in Job xx. 16, "poison" of asps. The *Targum* renders it "*the cup of maledictions.*" Ver. 17. "*Serpents, cockatrices,*" *i.e.*, serpents, even cockatrices, or *vipers: Tsiphoni*, small but very venomous vipers, basilisks which cannot be charmed. Its name, *Tsiphoni*, given to it on account of its remarkable hissing; its sting deadly (Prov. xxiii. 32, where rendered "adder"). So fatal is its wound, that natural historians assert that all other serpents hurry away and hide themselves at its hiss, and that its very breath will blast plants and poison the air. "This dreadful snake is not a native of Canaan, but abounds in the miry fields of Egypt" (*Dr. Porter*). Ver. 22. "*Balm in Gilead:*" this balsam early mentioned in Scripture (Gen. xxxvii. 25) as an article of commerce with Midianitish merchants, who carried it to Egypt; sufficiently valued as to be among the presents sent by Jacob to Joseph (Gen. xliii. 11), and possessed of acknowledged medicinal properties. It cannot be identified with any particular tree. *Pliny* and *Strabo* attest the celebrated virtue of the *opobalsamum* or *myrobalanus;* but Bochart selects the resin drawn from the *terebinth* as the "balm" here alluded to. There is now no tree in Gilead which yields such balsam, but it may be found in Arabia and

Egypt. A fragrant and medicinal balsam is used and sold among Turks which is obtained from Mecca.

4. Manners and Customs. Ver. 1. "*They shall bring out the bones,*" &c.: ornaments and treasures were buried with the dead; the enemies, knowing this, would ransack the sepulchres, and plunder the dead of their insignia and valuables. Refer to *Josephus*, Antiq. vii. ch. 15, § 3, for account of Hyrcanus rifling the sepulchre of David, robbing it of 3000 talents; and to *Heredotus* i. 187, for statement of like act of Darius with grave of Nitocris. A customary arrangement for crown, sceptre, and royal insignia to be interred with kings; nobles and the wealthy imitated this by burying other treasures and valuables. Ver. 8. "*Pen of the scribes:*" the pen or *style* was of iron, pointed (*cf.* vii. 1), though this "iron pen," or graver of steel, was probably used only for tracing letters upon stone or metallic plates. When tablets of wood covered with wax, skins, and parchments received the writing, a metal stylus or a reed formed the "pen." Ver. 22. "*Is there no physician there?*" The inquiry suggests that practitioners in the medical art had established themselves in Gilead, who both collected the "balm," and applied it to the suffering who resorted thither for healing.

5. Literary Criticism. Ver. 1. "*At that time:*" points back to chap. vii. 32, "the days come." Ver. 4. "*Shall they fall . . . shall he turn?*" More correctly, Shall *men* fall and not arise? shall *one* turn, &c.? An appeal to the general experience and conduct of men—viz., that it is customary for men to arise after having fallen, &c. Ver. 6. "*No man repented him,*" &c.: *lit.* No man *has pity upon* his wickedness; the sinner would compassionate and commiserate himself did he fully realise his sin and its consequences. Ver. 8. "*Certainly in vain made he it,*" &c. *Margin*, "The false pen of the scribes worketh for falsehood." *Lange* also, taking the verb עָשָׂה as emphatically *to work*, translates thus: "*Behold he has worked for a lie, i.e.*, has done lying work; *the pen of the scribes has produced lies.*" *Keil* and *Speaker's Com.* render the words: "Lo! the lying pen of the scribes hath made it (the law of the Lord) into a lie." The *Vulgate* has, "Verily, falsehood has the false pen of the scribe wrought." Ver. 10–12. The LXX. omits from the words, "for every one from the least," &c., to the end of ver. 12. They are a repetition of words from chap. vi. 12–15. Jeremiah frequently quotes his former utterances; hence Hitzig's suggestion that they are an interpolation is without force. Ver. 13. "*And the things that I have given them shall pass away from them:*" the old translators (Chald., Syr., Vulg.) render the passage, "What I have given them they have trangressed." *Ewald* sustains this. The A.V. translation suggests the meaning, they should lose God's beneficent gifts. *Umbreit*, *Venema*, *Keil*, and *Speaker's Com.* render the words, "*So I appoint unto them those that shall pass over them:*" נָתַן, *to* appoint; and עָבַר, *to overrun* (*cf.* Isa. viii. 8). *Hitzig* and *Graf.*, "I deliver them up to mem who pass over them." Ver. 14. "*Be silent,*" from דָּמָה, the Niphil form (נִדְמָה), meaning *to perish;* then "*put to silence,*" from דָּמַם, Hiphil form (הִדְמִם), meaning *to destroy;* hence, *Jehovah hath decreed our ruin.* Ver. 18. "When *I would comfort myself,*" &c.: *lit.*, "Oh, my comfort in the sorrow! my heart within me is faint;" an outcry of anguish. *Noyes* renders it, "Oh, where is consolation for my sorrow?" Ver. 19. "*Behold the voice . . . because of them in a far country.*" More correctly, "Behold! the sound of the cry of the daughter of my people *from a distant land;*" her cry being, "Is not the Lord in Zion?" &c., from which she is now an exile. To this question God returns the counter-question, "Why have they provoked Me?" &c. Ver. 21. "*I am hurt,*" am *broken, i.e.*, in heart. "*I am black,*" am in mourning (*Keil*); I go mourning (*Speaker's Com.*). Ver. 22. "*The health,*" &c. Why, then, has *no bandage* (of balsam) been laid upon my people? (So *Keil*, *Speaker's Com.*) But "health" is the more uniform rendering of the word (*cf.* xxx. 17, xxxiii. 6). *Hend.* remarks, "אֲרוּכָה, *health*, properly means *length*, from the circumstances of long linen bandages being employed in binding up wounds."

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER VIII.

Section 1–3. The dead: their graves dishonoured.
" 4–12. The living: their unabashed iniquity.
" 13–17. Maledictions: God's messages of doom.
" 18–22. Lamentations: the prophet's dismay.

Ver. 1–3. The Dead: Their Graves Dishonoured.

This would be done by the Chaldean hordes in search for booty. Jeremiah, however, suggests not the *motive* of this sacrilegious disturbance of the dead; he regards only the *fact* as the punitive judgment of an offended God. Even plunderers may carry into effect the righteous displeasure and retribution of the Most High.

"At the time of the siege of Jerusalem, not only will they bury in Tophet (vii. 32–34) till there be no more room, such will be the carnage; but they who bury there will also open the graves of those who are buried, the kings and princes of Judah, and expose them to public contumely and shame. Perhaps the corpse of King Jehoiachim was then disinterred (xxii. 19)."—*Wordsworth.*

"Their dead bodies should lie unburied in the sight of these their deities (ver. 2), whom these idolaters had worshipped while they were alive, and thought they could never do enough for, but who could do them no good either alive or dead."—*Trapp.*

"In their reckless search, the barbarians would never think of replacing the bones which they had disturbed, but would leave them exposed to open gaze. The objects of idolatrous worship are here introduced with admirable effect, as unconcerned spectators of the indignity offered to their former worshippers. The condition of survivors (ver. 3) would be more pitiable than that of the dead."—*Henderson.*

I. The sanctuaries of the dead profaned (ver 1). What a conception does this fact supply of the barbarity of the Chaldean hordes! Nothing sacred in their esteem. War lets loose the worst passions of the best armies, but never did an army equal in lawless badness this Babylonian host. Lust and greed drove them on to ruthless violation of everything they met. (See Addenda to chap. viii. 1, "*Graves disturbed.*")

II. The pitiless indifference of idol deities (ver. 2). How does this statement set before these idolaters the worthlessness of their gods! In their most evil hour their chosen deities will neither commiserate or help them. Suggestive of man's treatment from those he substitutes for the true and gracious Lord; contemptuous unconcern in his day of calamity.

III. The horror and anguish of survivors (ver. 3). There is something worse than death; yea, than a dishonoured burial: *life*, when itself "*evil;*" when "*driven*" away by God; when abandoned to "*places*" of exile, among foes and scoffers and cruel despots. To live experiencing and enduring God's vengeance is the direst calamity man can bear (comp. Job iii. 21, 22; Rev. ix. 6). (Addenda to chap. viii. 3, "*Death desired.*")

Ver. 4–12. The Living: Their Unabashed Iniquity.

I. They would not attend to the dictates of reason (ver. 4, 5). The most careful traveller may miss his way; but then, as soon as he is aware of it, "*will he not return?*" No man in his wits will go on in a way that he knows will never bring him to his journey's end: "*why then has this people slidden back with a perpetual backsliding?*" The nature of sin: it is—(1.) *backsliding;* (2.) *perpetual*, unless Divine grace prevent it; (3.) *a cherished deceit;* (4.) of which its dupes *refuse to be undeceived.*

II. They would not attend to the dictates of conscience (ver 6). Observe: 1. *What expectations there were from them*, that they would bethink themselves: "I hearkened and heard. (Comp. Job. xxxiii. 27.) 2. *How these expectations were disappointed:* "They spake not aright;" and the only speaking "aright" would have been in words of "repentance of wickedness;" but this was refused. (*a.*) They did not take even the first step towards repentance: "None said, What have I done?" (*b.*) They were so far from repenting that they went on resolutely in their sins: "Every one turned to his course," &c.

III. They would not attend to the dictates of Providence (ver. 7). Though they are "my people," yet, 1. *They were heedless of God's dealings with them:* "Know not the judgments of the Lord." 2. *The inferior creatures around them showed more sagacity.* (Addenda on ver. 7, "*Stork*," "*Turtle*," &c.)

IV. They would not attend to the dictates of the written Word (ver. 8, 9). Many enjoy abundance of the means of grace, but they do not answer the end of their having them. Those who are "wise" yet do no better for their souls with their

wisdom than they who pretended to none, will have reason to be "ashamed," and will be taken in their own snare. 1. *He threatens the judgments of God against them* (ver. 10). 2. *He gives a reason for those judgments:* they were *greedy of wealth*, "given to covetousness;" they made *no conscience of speaking truth*, "every one dealeth falsely;" they *flattered people in their sins* (ver. 11); they were *lost to all sense of virtue* and honour (ver. 12), "they could not blush." Such as these were ripe for ruin.—*Henry.*

Ver. 13–17. Maledictions: God's Messages of Doom.

A succession of varied images and ideas; vine, stronghold, trouble, invasion, serpents: Jeremiah's quick transitions from figure to fact is characteristic. Also observe the frequent change of speakers in this section: God speaks in ver. 13, the people in ver. 14, 15; Jeremiah himself, ver. 16; Jehovah again, ver. 17; a style indicative of the passion and intensity of the prophet. Both the varied imagery and the interchange of speakers denotes the deep emotion under which Jeremiah now speaks: the dreadful theme harrows his own spirit. Behind his impetuous thoughts and words lay this great grief: "How can I endure to see the destruction of my people?" To announce "glad tidings of good things" is a far easier and happier task than to bear messages of wrath. Yet we must not say, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace" (ver. 11); but tell fully what God bids. A series of maledictions under varied images.

I. *The vine:* **Fruitless things God will consume** (ver. 13). "There *are* no grapes," &c. (not, there shall be). Fruitlessness is the reason why God will "consume." *Keil* translates ver. 13: "Away, away will I sweep them, saith Jehovah: no grapes on the vine, and no figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf is withered; so I appoint unto them those that shall pass over them." And the *Speaker's Com.* thus comments: "These intermediate clauses describe the *present state of the Jews*, and not, as in the Authorised Version, the result of God's judgment. Judah is a vine which bears no fruit, a tree which makes even no profession of life, for her leaf is dry." Others regard the words as threatening the Jews with the deprivation of the fruits of the earth; but the former interpretation has fuller authority and significance.

II. *Strongholds:* **Defences cannot exclude the penalties of sin** (ver. 14). The people awake at length to the urgency of the case: would shelter themselves in fortified cities; yet withal they realise their sure destruction: "*Let us perish* (be silent) *there.*" Strong walls cannot exclude God's judgments: "The Lord our God hath *decreed our destruction.*" (See *Literary Criticisms* on ver. *supra.*) Sin must **eventuate** in overthrow: "Because we have sinned," &c. Though they rally one another to flee, yet they are conscious they cannot escape; they are irremediably lost. It is mournful abandonment to despair.

III. *Trouble:* **Sinners' false hopes assuredly shattered** (ver. 15). False prophets had beguiled them to "look for peace;" now they experience the utter reverse: "no good," for where can "good" be found when God is lost? "and behold trouble," properly "*terror;*" so overwhelming would the calamity prove. Suggestive of the sinner's anguish of dread—in death, in judgment.

IV. *Invasion:* **Terrible forces of retributive justice** (ver. 16). (See on chap. iv. 15.) The border-line crossed by the foe. *Health* may be our border-line, or a *carnal confidence;* the enemy will pass that line, and then, oh our dismay! There are "strong ones," rushing cavalry, which scour the land; no resisting their fury or checking their impetuous speed. The *result:* "devoured."

V. *Serpents:* **Alleviation and avoidance of misery impossible** (ver. 17): "not be charmed," and "they will bite you." No incantation, devices, or persuasives will disarm the attack of the foe; the venomous bite will inevitably bring death. Such is the issue of the "Serpent's" bite. No crafty measures will avert the miseries

which follow upon sin: "At last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Ver. 18–22. Lamentations: The Prophet's Dismay.

As Jeremiah regards his people's ruin, his heart is sorely oppressed with grief and horror. (Addenda to chap. viii. 18, "*Bitter lamentations.*") He was wholly unlike those fastidious philanthropists

> "Who sigh for wretchedness, yet shun the wretched,
> Nursing in some delicious solitude
> Their dainty loves and slothful sympathies."
> —Coleridge, "*Religious Musings.*"

I. A disastrous event (ver. 19). The invaders have carried the people into a "far country." (See *Lit. Crit. supra.*) From the scene of their exile their bitter laments come ringing upon the prophet's troubled ear. Yet their complaining cry, "Is not the Lord in Zion?" is answered by God's accusing inquiry concerning their prolonged and provoking apostasy.

II. A grievous reflection (ver. 20). The day of hope and remedy is irretrievably gone! This is the bitter outcry of the wretched exiles themselves. Sinners *will* one day see and bewail their impiety and folly. (Addenda, chap. viii. 20, "*Opportunity lost.*")

III. A stricken mourner (ver. 18, 21). He can lay hold on no comfort in his sorrow; calls after it as lost, and his burdened heart is sick within him; while also he himself suffers (ver. 21) the agonies which he witnesses his people bear. In this Jeremiah was a type of Him who was "stricken and afflicted;" for "surely *He* hath borne *our griefs.*"

IV. A bewildered inquiry (ver. 22). (1.) *A remedy existed:* "balm." (2.) *Skilled administrators* of the remedy could be found: "physicians there" (these physicians were her priests and prophets, scribes and wise men; comp. ver. 8–11); yet she had suffered many things of many physicians, without being healed of any. For there is but one True Physician for the maladies of sin, and to Him she had not applied. "*Why?*" The prophet is staggered at Judah's neglect of Him: what is her reason? "Neglect of the great salvation" is therefore unreasonable, unjustifiable, astounding. For because of such neglect unutterable miseries and grievous wounds remain, and must continually be borne. Verily, man's wilful repudiation of the Divine remedy is appalling, and he thereby "wrongs his own soul."

HOMILETIC TREATMENT OF SELECTED VERSES IN CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1–3. *Theme:* The dead dishonoured, yet death desired. (Addenda to chap. viii. 1, 3, "*Dead molested; Death desired.*")

Note: Burial is an expression of our hope of resurrection; hence our common reverence for places of sepulture, and our horror at sacrilegious violation of the grave.

"The dreadful desolation which the Chaldean army would make in the land would strangely alter the property of death itself, and for the worse too:

"I. Death shall not now be, as it always used to be, the repose of the dead. Threatened in former chapter that slain should be unburied, but here the graves of the buried are to be maliciously opened.

"II. Death shall now be, what it never used to be, the choice of the living. And this, not in a believing hope of happiness in the other life, but in an utter despair of any ease in this life."—*Henry.*

Ver. 2. *Theme:* Phases of idolatrous homage.

"There is great force in the piled-up verbs by which their worship of the heavenly bodies is described.

"1. *With their hearts* they 'loved

them. 2. *With costly offerings* they 'served' them. 3. *With submissive following* they 'walked after' them. 4. *Frequenting their temples*, in order to gain their favour, they 'sought' them. 5. *Bowing down before them* and publicly honouring them, they 'worshipped' them.

"Yet these gods, thus served with heart and hand, do nothing whatever for their worshippers, except *to aid their bones to decay*. Hitzig well points out how the prophet, beginning with the *heart* ('loved'), describes their worship in the *various stages of development*, and then contrasts its fulness with the *miserable reward* which ensues."—*Speaker's Com.*

I. Progressive stages of idolatrous service.

II. Absolute entirety of idolatrous self-subjection.

III. Pitiless abandonment by idols of their votaries.

IV. Melancholy doom of idolatrous victims.

Ver. 4. *Theme:* THAT MEN HABITUALLY TRY TO RIGHT THEMSELVES.

When *they fall*, they are not so senseless as to lie there; they can and they do get up. When they *err and lose their way*, they do not madly resolve to accept their mistake and continue to go wrong; they refuse to proceed along a road which leads they know not where, but certainly where they do not wish to go; and they retrace their steps.

Basil uses the text as a *motive for repentance.*

Chrysostom finds in it an argument that no *sinner need despair of repentance.*

It suggests: i. *The sinner's power to help himself.* ii. *The stupidity of doing nothing to better his case.* iii. *The extent to which his self-help can attain.* iv. *The common proneness of man to fall and err.* v. *The necessity for direction, that he may not continue to wander and so be lost.* vi. *That God approves man's efforts to retrace his errors.* vii. *Grace will certainly avail for those who desire to tread the right way.*

Ver. 5. *Theme:* PERPETUAL BACKSLIDING. (Addenda to chap. viii. 5.)

I. The causes of backsliding.

1. Fear of man. 2. Intercourse with worldly society. 3. Presumption. 4. Secret sin. 5. Neglect of prayer.

II. The symptoms of backsliding.

1. Absence of pleasure in attending to the secret exercises of religion. 2. Irregular and unprofitable attendance on public ordinances. 3. Unwillingness to act or suffer for the honour of Christ. 4. Uncharitable feelings toward fellow-Christians. 5. Indulgence in sins once abandoned.

III. The forms of backsliding.

1. Declension into error. 2. Into unbelief. 3. Into lukewarmness or want of love. 4. Into prayerlessness. 5. Into immorality. 6. Into open rejection of a Christian profession.

IV. The evils of backsliding.

1. *Its evils to the backslider:* (1.) It diminishes his happiness. (2.) It arrests his progress. (3.) It destroys his usefulness.

2. *Its evils to others:* (1.) It staggers the anxious inquirer. (2.) Seduces the weak Christian. (3.) Embarrasses all the friends of religion. (4.) Supplies materials to the mocker.

V. The cure of backsliding.

1. Let the backslider remember from whence he has fallen. 2. Let him reflect on his guilt and danger. 3. Let him return to God, from whom he has wandered. 4. Let him live near Christ. 5. Let him forsake the sin into which he has fallen. 6. Let him learn to depend on the promised aid of the Holy Spirit.—*Brooks*, "*Plans.*"

Ver. 6. "WHAT HAVE I DONE?" (Addenda to chap. viii. 6, "*Self-interrogation.*")

1. In reference *to God.* 2. To *myself.* 3. To *Christ.* 4. To *Christians.* 5. To the *unconverted.*—*Brooks.*

"The thought expressed here is best explained by what St. Paul says in 1 Cor. xi. 31: 'For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.'"—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 6, 7. *Theme:* MAN ON EARTH.

Text leads us to look upon man on earth in three aspects:

I. As the special object of Divine

attention. "I hearkened and heard," says God; expressing deep interest. Two things show His special interest in man *on earth*:

(*a*) *The language He employs in the Bible.* "As I live, saith the Lord," &c. "Lo, these three years I came seeking fruit," &c.

(*b.*) *The provision He has made in the Bible. Why* this special attention?

i. We may imagine that *man's spiritual infirmities on earth* would draw towards him the special notice of his Maker. The diseased child attracts most parental sympathy and attention. This world is the invalid member of God's family.

ii. We may imagine that *man's critical position on earth* would draw towards him, &c. Here, he has practically to decide his destiny.

iii. We may imagine that *man's social influence on earth* would draw, &c. Who can tell the influence, for good or evil, of one man on this earth? *One* may send thousands to hell, or "turn many to righteousness."

II. As the probationary subject of redemptive discipline.

Under this system three things are required of him:

1. *Rectitude of language.* "They spake not aright," *i.e.*, in accordance with moral truth.

2. *Contrition of heart.* "No man repented of his wickedness." Repentance is essential to his recovery.

3. *Self-searching thought.* "What have I done?" in relation to my soul, the universe, God? When prodigal began to *think* he came to himself.

III. As the wicked abuser of the system under which he lives.

In two ways, as here specified:

1. *Reckless obstinacy.* "Every one turned to his course." And the way of each was from God; as infidel; drunkard, &c. "As the horse rusheth" (Job xxix.)

2. *Unnatural ignorance.* "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth," &c. (1.) These creatures have remarkable instincts, suitable to the external circumstances of their nature. So have you. They have instincts of *perceiving* coming changes, and of *adjusting* themselves to those changes. (2.) These creatures invariably render obedience to their instincts. You do not. *How unnatural!*—*Homilist* (Addenda to chap. viii. 7, "*Stork*," &c.).

Ver. 8. "*Lying pen of the scribes.*" (*cf.* "*Personal Allusions*," on ver. *supra*, and Addenda.)

Ver. 8, 9. *Theme:* INTELLECTUAL VANITY PERVERTING REVELATION.

"The law of the Lord is with us;" that was the state of their case; but what did *they do with* it, and what did *it do for them?* What we *have* is of subordinate importance to the *use* we make of it and the *advantage* it secures to us. Men now have the Word of God; how do they treat it, what does it profit them?

I. Sources of sacred wisdom. "Law of Lord is with us." They "knew the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation." The Jews, having in there possession these sacred oracles, might have attained to the "wisdom which is from above," and consequently been the wisest people on earth. We possess a revelation which "makes the simple wise," and teaches holiest and most precious truth to man.

II. Perversion of the sources of sacred wisdom. "Pen of scribes made it a lie." (See *Lit. Crit. supra*, on ver.). By false interpretation, and delusive application of the law. This is the constant result of:

1. *Wilful trifling* with the Scriptures. 2. *Intellectual conceit*, which reverses and mutilates Scripture language. 3. *Narrow bigotry*, which will bend revelation to its own shibboleth. 4. *Blind hostility*, which rebels against the plain Word, and hence explains away literal teachings. 5. *Dainty sentimentalism*, which softens and practically neutralises distasteful teachings, strong anathemas, and bold declarations.

III. Arrogant pretension to the possession of sacred wisdom. "We are wise;" for no other reason than that they *had* the Scriptures, and *knew the letter.* "The law of the Law is *with us*," is a boast of more than outward possession of it, but also of inward ac

quaintance with it, mastery of its contents. Such a familiarity did not, does not, always *engender reverence*, or *lead to obedience*. It fostered vanity of mind, intellectual conceit, and became a snare. These scribes rose, indeed, to be "wise above what is within."

IV. Delusion resulting from the arrogance of wisdom (ver. 9). Thus, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." God will refute such irreverent and merely literary wisdom. Christ thanked the Father that "from the wise and prudent" He had "*hid*" the precious truth. God denies *real light* to the intellectually proud, as they exclude themselves from a *saving knowledge* of the truth. Lowliness and submissiveness are qualifications for Divine enlightenment,—"revealed them unto babes."

V. Refutation of man's vaunted wisdom. God asks, "What wisdom is in them?" With all their knowledge and their satisfied vanity, they had practically "rejected the word of the Lord." It is "he that *doeth* His will shall know of the doctrine:" hence *God repudiates their* boast,—*denounces them* as inflated fools, "wise (only) in their own conceits," and *predicts their coming shame*. Intellectual vanity easily leads to tampering with and perverting God's Word; and then the condemnation is inherited with which the volume of the book closes (Rev. xxii. 18, 19).

Comments:

Ver. 10–12. Almost identical with chap. vi. 12–15; yet some distinctive dissimilarities exist sufficient to refute Hitzig's suggestion that they are an interpolation. The LXX. omit them. Jeremiah, however, frequently reproduces his figures and phrases: *e.g.* (comp. v. 15 with xiv. 19).

"*To those that shall inherit them*" (ver. 10). "Rather to those that shall take possession of them, *i.e.*, to conquerors who shall take them by force. To "*inherit*" is to obtain legally, but the verb here used is that applied to Ahab's seizure of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings xxi. 15), to the subjugation of Palestine by the Israelites (Lev. xx. 24), to the Babylonian conquests (Isa. xiv. 21)."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 13. *Theme.* THREATENING OF COMING PUNISHMENT. i. *Severity of the visitation.* (*a.*) *Certain:* "surely" (*b.*) *Desolating:* "consume." (*c.*) *Agonising:* "consume." ii. *Reason of the visitation.* (*a.*) *Fruitlessness:* "no grapes, no figs:" *i.e.*, there *are* none. (*b.*) *Decay:* "leaf is withered." In consequence of barrenness Christ cursed the fig-tree. iii. *Selected agency of the visitation.* Read, "I appoint those who will pass over them." (*a.*) *God regulates* punishment: "I appoint." (*b.*) *Unconscious agents* fulfilling His word: "them that shall pass over them." Note: 1. *God has fixed and serious designs concerning men.* 2. *He has His agents ready and able to carry them out.* 3. When *we talk of peace* and safety, see no invader, suspect no foe; yea, while the *enemy himself is without plan of attack*, the design for our overthrow stands complete. 4. Hence, the *certainty* that "the wicked shall not go unpunished," and the *urgency* of our forsaking evil, and seeking reconciliation with God.

Ver. 14, 15. *Theme:* DEFIANCE REDUCED TO DESPAIR.

Until now, Judah had resented God's warning and messages: had carried on the war of resistance against His Word; entrenched in her carnal security and insolent indifference, had refused to repent or yield. This verse shows her vaunted *confidence gone;* she must "flee to defenced cities:" and her *proud spirit broken;* she must "be silent there." Yet the opening sentence, "Why sit still?" may be, not a panic cry, that her peril is imminent, but a summons of her dejected soul to self-help: one more effort to keep above surrender and despair.

I. **A rallying-call to action and self-defence.** "Why sit still? Let us go to defenced cities." (See Homily on iv. 5.)

Calvin remarks that these words show "that they (as hypocrites are wont to do) had *recourse to expedients*, by which they thought to protect themselves against God's wrath. They (hypocrites) indeed feel their evils, and seek to apply remedies; but they *stop at the nearest*

reliefs, without seeking to pacify God, and to return into favour with Him; and think themselves to be safe if they betake themselves to this or that hiding-place."

1. *Self-chiding:* "Why do we sit still?" 2. *Self-reliance:* "Assemble yourselves, and let us enter." 3. *Self-delusion:* "enter into the *defenced cities*, and let us be silent there." *Silent there:* some render the words, *rest* there: דָּמָה, to rest or be silent. Merely defend ourselves in quiet, until the storm blow over.

II. **A despairing recognition of their woful case.** "Let us be silent there; for the Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink." Authority determines the word "silent" to mean "*perish*," lit. be put to silence, from דָּמַם. All that they can promise themselves, in fleeing to fortified cities, is a *little respite*. 1. *Salvation is beyond hope:* the "defenced cities" will fall; they cannot expect, therefore, to be saved, but only to put off a little longer the inevitable ruin. 2. *Destruction is determined for them:* "Jehovah hath put us to silence," *i.e.*, hath *decreed our destruction*, and there is now no escape. And "hath given us water of gall;" *i.e.*, *of poison*. (See "*Natural History*" on verse.) This simile suggests the bitter suffering incident to their nearing ruin. *Horsley* renders the words, "And let us sit there *in despair*, since the Lord our God hath *brought us to despair*," &c. For God had at last reduced their defiance of Him, and their self-confident indifference, to utter despair. (Addenda, chap. viii. 14, "*Defiance issuing in despair.*")

III. A paralysing acknowledgment of sin's merited judgment. "The Lord hath put us to silence, &c., *because we have sinned against the Lord.*" Suggests

1. *God is against sin:* He will not condone it.

2. *Sin hath entailed death.* God *decrees* destruction, and gives the poisonous cup *to the sinner*,—which is the decree *brought home to the transgressor* against whose sin that decree has gone forth. Flee where they might, they would carry their impiety with them, and, therefore, *God's decree* against iniquity would *follow them into their fortifications*, and wrath Divine would fall upon them there. There is no escaping the sentence and doom which sin entails, for there is *no evading God*, nor shutting off from us the operation of His omnipresent laws. Men will realise this at last.

IV. **A melancholy confutation of the sinner's vain hopes** (ver. 15).

1. *Flattering expectations are easily cherished.* By (1.) The sinner's own foolish vanity. (2.) By the false counsellors to whom he listens. (See Notes on chap. iv. 10, and also viii. 11.)

2. *Experience scatters our false expectations.* Man has the making of his *expectations;* God of his *experiences.* Our expectations are what we *desire;* our experiences what we *deserve.*

Ver. 18. *Theme:* COMFORT IN SORROW. I. *Need of comfort.* II. *Attempt to comfort ourselves.* III. *Such attempt vicious and vain.*—*J. Farren.* (Addenda to chap. viii. 18, "*Bitter lamentations.*")

Ver. 19, 20. *Theme:* A BITTER CRY FROM SCENES OF EXILE.

"This verse should be translated thus:—'*Behold the voice of the cry* for help *of the daughter of my people* from a distant land! *Is not Jehovah in Zion? Is not her King* there? *Why have they provoked Me to anger with their* carved *images, with* foreign *vanities?*' The invaders have not merely wasted the land (ver. 16), but carried the remnant into captivity. The prophet seems to hear their loud cry for help, but their complaint, *Is there no Jehovah in Zion?* is met by God demanding of them the reason why, instead of worshipping Him, they have set up idols."—*Speaker's Com.*

"Because they have chosen the empty idols from abroad ("*strange*," foreign "vanities"), Jehovah, the Almighty God of Zion, has cast them out into a far country amidst strange people."—*Keil.*

"The common cant was, *Is not the*

Lord in Zion? And will not Zion's God protect Zion's king and kingdom? This outcry of theirs reflects upon God, as if His power and promise were broken or weakened; and, therefore, He returns an answer to it immediately, *Why have they provoked Me?* &c. They have withdrawn from their allegiance to Him, and so have thrown themselves out of His protection."—*Henry.*

In the midst of their bitterness and woe, they remember the God whom they had forgotten in their prosperity; but this remembrance is not a gracious one, —they do not remember Him to humble themselves before Him, but to bring accusations against Him.

1. We have **a cry**: That is how the prayer is described. 1. It had in it a *meaning:* "the *voice* of their cry." 2. *The matter* of the voice: "for them that dwell in a far country" [interpreting the words as Zion's agonising appeal to God *for* those "afar-off," like the prodigal "in a *far country*"]. 3. *Their settled estrangement* from God is implied, "them *that dwell* in a far country." 4. This prayer for those long estranged is *from God's own people:* "the cry of the daughter of my people."

II. **The question**: "Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her?" Surely, yea. Then if the Lord be in the midst of Zion, 1. *Why do we pray as if He were not?* Rather pray, knowing Him near to answer as by fire. 2. *Why do you despond because of your weakness?* God is all-sufficient. 3. *Why those great fears about the prosperity of the Church?* The battle is the Lord's: let us go on and conquer.

III. **Another question**: "Why have they provoked Me?" &c. 1. Here is a *question for the Lord's people.* It is a very solemn thing when God is in His Church, how that Church behaves herself. 2. This text has a *particular voice to sinners.* You have been saying, God is amid His people; how is it I remain unblessed, unsaved? Because of your "vanities," your idols, your sins.

IV. **Another cry**: "The harvest is past," &c. (ver. 20). We thought God would keep us in the days of harvest; but *the harvest is past.* We dreamed He would chase away our enemies when the summer months had come; but *the summer is ended,* and still Chaldea has her foot upon Judah's neck—still we drink the wormwood and the gall: *we are not saved.*

What harvest, what summers (spiritually) we have had: ingathering of *souls;* yet *you are not saved!* Some in your home converted, &c., but you not saved. The day is near when you will have to cry in the *sight of the approach of death,* "The harvest is past, &c., and *I not saved!*" Yes, a day comes when, *being in torments,* you will cry those words! We are looking for *Christ's coming:* and *then,* seeing Him gather His harvest into the sky, the cry again will rise, "*Harvest past: we not saved!*"—*Spurgeon.*

Ver. 20. *Theme:* THE LOST HARVEST. "*Harvest is past,*" &c.

Language descriptive of the awful position of those who, having trifled away gracious opportunities, are found at close of life unforgiven and unrenewed. Consider:

I. That the means and opportunities of securing salvation are graciously afforded to men.

II. That these means and opportunities will soon pass away.

III. That when once past, they will have disappeared for ever. Irretrievable despair!—*Sunday at Home.*

Theme: THE UNAVAILING LAMENTATION. Bethink:

I. That God has given you the gracious seasons of summer and harvest. 1. *The summer* (*a.*) of life; (*b.*) of reason; (*c.*) of opportunities. 2. *The harvest* (*a.*) of knowledge; (*b.*) of privileges; (*c.*) of blessings.

II. That these may pass away unimproved. 1. Many *do not think.* 2. *Will not forsake their sins.* 3. *Will not believe.* 4. *Will procrastinate.*

III. That the regrets of such will be awful and unavailing. 1. Sometimes their regrets are *expressed in this world.* 2. They will *surely be uttered in eternity.* Regrets (1.) *of intense agony,* of recollection, of self-condemnation;

(2.) regrets *will be unavailing*,—no space for repentance, no ear for prayer, no fountain, no cross! (3.) *of black despair*, "harvest past," &c.

1. None would choose this portion. 2. Who would risk it? 3. Who will flee from it? *Now* is the "harvest," &c.—*Jabez Burns.*

Theme: LIFE'S SOLEMN OPPORTUNITY.

I. What considerations involved. 1. *The object:* "harvest." 2. *The opportunity:* "summer." 3. The *limitation:* "past," "ended." 4. The *neglect irreparable:* "We not saved."

II. To what circumstances applicable. 1. Neglect of *decision for God.* 2. Neglect of *spiritual culture.* 3. Neglect of *Christian service.*

III. What lessons enforced. Importance of—1. *Present opportunity.* 2. *Present dedication.*—*J. Farren.*

Theme: CAUTIONS AND CONSOLATIONS.

Text may be accommodated so as to admit of a general application, and be interpreted in a spiritual sense. Then this *lamentation* may be understood as the

I. Language of final and absolute despair. That, having *neglected means*, wasted opportunity, resisted Spirit, "hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord," now they have no longer hope of mercy: *nothing to expect but judgment and misery!* Let us dread the doom of the foolish virgins.

II. Language of deep and humbling conviction. That, having *abused their only opportunity* for seeking salvation, for attending to "the one thing needful," for fulfilling the solemn object of life, it is gone for ever; *their day of grace is over*, they must therefore perish without remedy! Awakened at last to the interests of their souls, but awakened too late. "Redeem the time."

III. Language of distressing and gloomy despondency. Such despondency as the *afflicted and tempted servants of Jesus Christ* sometimes experience: their minds clouded, peace gone, hope perished, they take up unrighteously the melancholy cry of text: "After all we have thought and felt, we find we have been deceiving ourselves, we have not really known and loved the Lord, our present gloom is proof against our being His; we are undone; harvest is past!" &c. They are "in heaviness through manifold temptations."

Some have a well-assured hope that their harvest is *not* passed, that they *are* saved! For they have fled to Christ for refuge, have in themselves the witness of the Spirit. Remember, that for these who have reasons for hope and joy, the term of life is the "summer" in which they must labour in the service, and for the glory, of their Lord.—*Rev. Ed. Cooper*, A.D. 1816.

Theme: NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITIES.

I. There are certain seasons which may be called the soul's harvests. 1. Times of religious privilege. 2. Times of special religious action. 3. In a sense, the whole of life is a harvest time. 4. *Now* is emphatically a season of harvest.

II. These seasons have their period of close. 1. By national judgments. 2. By providential removal. 3. By the withdrawing of the Holy Ghost. 4. By death.

III. That these seasons may pass without due impression. 1. Proved from the fact that many take no heed concerning their souls at all. 2. Many are convicted, but never converted. 3. Exhort all to seek the Lord without delay, for

IV. The remorse of those who allow such seasons to pass without due impression, will be—1. Fearful. 2. Unavailing.—*A. F. Barfield*, "*Christian World Pulpit.*"

Theme: SEASONS OF GRACE UNIMPROVED AND LOST.

Summer and harvest are proper *seasons of action;* opportunities for armies to take the field, subdue enemies, and bring about deliverance of an oppressed people. The winter that follows is *not* a fit season for action. An awful thing when favourable seasons for saving a people from *temporal* enemies and calamities are lost; but infinitely more alarming to lose

favourable seasons of saving their souls. This is ground for deepest lamentation when forced to say, "Harvest is past," &c. Consider:

I. **Favourable seasons**, which we should be careful to improve to the salvation of our souls.

1. *The summer days of youth.* Hopeful season: God loves "first ripe fruits:" young prayers, young tears, young faith, love, &c. (Eccles. xii. 1).

2. *When persons enjoy lively means and ordinances;* when Christ crucified is set before them with holy fervour and feeling.

3. *When there is a noise and shaking among the dry bones:* work of conviction and conversion is going forward, &c.

4. *When Satan's power is restrained,* and churches have rest from evil: this is a calm summer day.

5. *When God is visiting mankind with alarming providences:* then the inhabitants of the earth should learn righteousness.

II. *Who may be said to have* lost their summer days and favourable seasons of grace? We cannot be positive as to any while life remains, yet of some, sad grounds to fear.

1. *Those who have had the Spirit long striving with them,* but have resisted His striving and repelled Him (Ezek. xxiv. 13).

2. Those who *persist in sinful courses and harden themselves* against the reproofs of the Almighty (Prov. xxix. 1).

3. Those who *sin presumptuously,* sin in the face of light, in hopes of repentance and pardon (Num. xv. 30).

4. Those who are so *determinately bent on sin* that God, their own consciences, and God's ministers cease to reprove them (Ezek. iii. 27, Hos. iv. 17).

5. Those who *deliberately relapse into sin* after having been Divinely corrected and aroused to resolutions (Isa. i. 5).

6. Those who *give themselves up to commit sin with greediness,* and glory in it (Ephes. iv. 19, Phil. iii. 19).

7. Those who *mock the offers of the Gospel,* and despise those who bring them (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16). "Harvest is past," &c.

III. **The causes why men lose their hopeful seasons.**

1. *Unbelief;* did men believe God's Word, threatenings, and wrath to come, they would improve their seasons of grace, and flee to Christ.

2. *Promise themselves time;* leisure to attend to work of salvation; regard death and eternity as distant.

3. *Indulge sloth;* do not "give all diligence" to the duties of religion, public and private.

4. *Love of carnal company and sensual delights:* amid sinful pleasures they trifle away their summer days.

Application:

(1.) How *dreadful will be the end* of those who have lost all their opportunities of salvation! Remembrance of them will not ameliorate but embitter their case.

(2.) Such characters *act as if devoid of reason* (Jer. viii. 7, Prov. vi. 8); worse than the brutes that perish.

(3.) Let us *endeavour to improve Gospel seasons,* the summer and harvest for our souls, with greatest care. —*Hannum.*

There is in this text

I. **The acknowledgment of opportunity.**

II. **The confession of neglect.**

III. **The anticipation of doom.**

J. W. W., from Lange. (Addenda to chap. viii. ver. 20, "*Opportunity Lost.*")

Ver. 21. *Comments:*

"*For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt.*" The hopeless case of the people and kingdom moves the seer so deeply that he bursts forth with the cry, "For the breaking of my people I am broken" (the Hophil form = the breaking of the heart). "*I am black:*" used of wearing mourning—in other words, to be in mourning (*cf.* Ps. xxxv. 14, xxxviii. 7). "*Astonishment* hath taken hold:" *horror* hath taken hold on me (vi. 24, Mic. iv. 9). Help is nowhere to be found.—*Kiel.*

"Because of the breaking . . . I am broken:" the words of the prophet, whose *heart is crushed* by the sad cry of his countrymen.—*Speaker's Com.*

"*Astonished:*" the astonishment with which he was seized he no doubt sets down as being the opposite of the

people's torpor and insensibility; for they had no fear for themselves.—*Calvin.*

"I am contemned for bewailing my people's misery, who neither feel nor fear hurt."—*Trapp.*

"Observe here:

i. *How great his griefs were* (ver. 21). For their sin, and the miseries incurred by it. *It becomes us to lament the miseries* of our fellow-creatures, much more to lay to heart the calamities of our country, and especially of the Church of God. Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, yet *he did not rejoice in the proof of the truth of it* by its accomplishment, preferring the welfare of his country before his own reputation. If Jerusalem had repented and been spared, he would have been far from fretting, as Jonah did. Jeremiah had many enemies in Judah and Jerusalem, that hated, reproached, and persecuted him; and in the judgments brought upon them God reckoned with them for it, and pleaded His prophet's cause; yet he was far from rejoicing in it, so truly did he forgive his enemies and desire that God would forgive them.

ii. *How small his hopes were* (ver. 22). No medicine proper for a sick and dying kingdom; no skilful, faithful hand to apply the balm. He looks upon the case to be deplorable and beyond relief. The desolations made are irreparable, and the disease has come to such a height that there is no checking it."—*Henry.*

"Our connection with those who hear us continually is so full, so intimate, so tender, no one can understand it who has not experienced it. We get love, we get somewhat from the heart which was broken for its enemies, and which could cry on the cross: Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."—*Zinzendorf.*

Ver. 22. *Theme:* A CURE FOR DISEASED SOULS.

I. That mankind universally are in a diseased state.

The soul of man is meant, hence the diseases are those of the soul. That the distempers of the mind are compared to wounds, disease, and sickness, will appear from Ps. xxxviii. 5, ciii. 3; Ezek. xxxiv. 4; Matt. ix. 12. Point out some of these diseases:

1. *Atheism*, infidelity, or unbelief of Divine truths.

2. *Ignorance* of God and Gospel truths, even among those who profess to know Him (Hos. iv. 6). They may be cured (Rev. iii. 17, 18).

3. *Hardness of heart.* (Ezek. xxxvi. 26; Phil. i. 6).

4. *Earthly mindedness.* Other plagues kill their thousands, this kills its tens of thousands. Pharaoh's words are true of them (Exod. xiv. 3). Yet there is help for this (Col. iii. 12).

5. *Aversion to spiritual duties.* Many would rather toil their bodies a whole day than spend a quarter of an hour on their knees in secret with God. (Mal. i. 13). Relief for this (Ps. cx. 3; Isa. xl. 31; Ezek. xxxvi. 27).

6. *Hypocrisy* and formality in God's service (Isa. xxix. 13). This also may be healed (Jer. xxxi. 33; Prov. iv. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 16).

7. *Trusting to our own righteousness* (Rom. x. 10).

8. *Indwelling corruption* (Ps. lxv. 3; Isa. lxiv. 6). Yet there is help for this (Mic. vii. 19; Rom. vii. 24, 25).

9. *Backsliding.* This is a spiritual consumption, yet may be cured (Deut. xxx. 6; Hos. xiv. 4–6).

There are several symptoms which seem to render our diseases almost desperate and incurable.

α. When the body is *universally* affected, and with a complication of diseases, the case is truly alarming: and this is the state of the soul (Isa. i. 5, 6). Still we may be recovered; David was (Ps. ciii. 2, 3).

β. When diseases are of *long continuance* (Ps. li. 5; Deut. xxviii. 59). Yet the Lord can make dry bones live (Ezek. xxxvii).

γ. When all around consider *their case desperate.* Often the case with sinners (Ezek. xxxvii. 3, 11). Yet see the promise (Jer. xxx. 17).

δ. When its threatening *symptoms are not observed*, so as to provide timely remedies. Our case not unlike Israel's (Isa. lvii. 17).

ε. When the patient becomes *lethargic*, loses his senses, and cannot be awakened (Isa. xxvi. 11; xxix. 10). Still there is hope (Jer. xxxiii. 6).

II. That there is a physician who can cure all diseases.

God Himself (Exod. xv. 26). Our cure is the work of the whole Trinity, but especially of Jesus Christ (Luke iv. 18; Matt. ix. 12, 13). In this office of Healer, He was typified by the *brazen serpent* (John iii. 14); by the *Sun of Righteousness* (Mal. iv. 2); by the *Tree of Life* (Rev. xxii. 2). Being God-man, He is nobly qualified: for

1. *He is infinite in knowledge*, and understands all diseases, with the proper remedies, so that He never can err (John xxi. 17).

2. *He has sovereign authority*, and almighty power, so that He can command diseases to obey (Matt. ix. 2).

3. *He has infinite pity*, ready to help the distressed, even unasked, hence represented as Good Samaritan (Luke x. 33).

4. *He has wonderful patience* towards the distressed; bears with their ingratitude, and works their perfect cure.

III. The remedy which He applies to effect the cure.

It is His *own blood*. This is the true "Balm of Gilead" (Isa. liii. 5). Scripture speaks of other means of healing, *subservient to the blood:*

1. *The Spirit of God*, with His gracious operations on the soul (Gal. iii. 13, 14).

2. *The word and ordinances of Christ;* these are the "leaves of the Tree of Life," &c. (Rev. xxi. 2; comp. Ps. cvii. 20).

3. *Afflictions:* making us mourn our wounds, and apply for remedy (Isa. xxii. 9).

4. *Faithful ministers.* The Great Physician sends them to dispense wholesome doctrines (1 Tim. vi. 3; Tit. ii. 1).

5. *Pious Christians help by their prayers* (Jas. v. 15).

The Physician's method of applying the remedy. He

α. *Makes sinners sensible that they are sick* (Matt. ix. 12). This implies discovery of the nature of sin, grief over it (Ps. xxxviii. 6, 18), despair of healing ourselves (Hos. xiv. 3), and willingness to submit to the Physician's prescriptions (Acts ix. 6).

β. *Works faith in the soul, by His Holy Spirit:* i.e., persuades and enables him to embrace Christ as his Saviour, and apply the balm to his wounded soul. Then danger is over (John v. 24).

γ. *Accomplishes and perfects the cure* by the sanctifying influences of the Spirit (Matt. v. 8).

IV. The reasons why so few are healed, notwithstanding there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there. Cause in us: for

1. *Many are ignorant of their disease*, and wilfully so.

2. *Many are in love with their disease*, more than with their physician. God may say of them (Ps. lii. 3).

3. *Many neglect the season of healing* (Jer. viii. 20)

4. *Many will not trust Christ wholly* for healing.

5. *Many will not submit to the prescriptions of Christ;* to self-examination, repentance, godly sorrow, mortification; therefore are unhealed. To conclude:

α. Let those in a diseased state *see their danger*, for it is great; if they do not apply to this Physician, they cannot be healed.

β. Balm of Gilead is *freely offered* in the Gospel (Isa. xlv. 22; Ezek. xviii. 32).

γ. Consider *how long you have slighted this balm* already. Now improve your day, like the people of Capernaum (Luke iv. 40; 2 Cor. vi. 2).

δ. Those whom Christ has healed, manifest their gratitude by living to His glory.—*Hannum.*

(Addenda to chap. viii. 22. "*Balm of Gilead.*")

Ver. 22. *Theme:* REASONS FOR THE IRRELIGION OF THE MASSES.

"*Why health of my people not recovered?*"

Prophet referring to degeneracy and misery of Jews. Ask same question respecting the moral state of the masses of our own nation. Necessary to look

I. At our moral and evangelical resources.

1. No country in the world in all respects equal in privileges.

2. No age comparable to this: (*a.*) Plenitude of God's Word. (*b.*) Good books. (*c.*) Evangelical ministry. (*d.*) Rich variety of social institutions; for Young Men; Temperance; City Missions; Open Air Services, &c.

II. The fearful evils which still exist. Of these:

1. Avowed infidelity. Every form of scepticism.

2. General neglect of Divine worship.

3. Prevailing crime.

4. Juvenile precocity and profligacy.

5. Overwhelming intemperance.

III. The affecting inquiry presented. "Why then," &c.

Three classes of reasons:

1. In the Church: (i.) Prevalence of spiritual indifference. (ii.) Sectarian contentions. (iii.) Fewness of workers. (iv.) Want of spiritual self-denial. (v.) Coldness in prayer. No sense of the ruin of souls. (vi.) Feeble faith; not proving God.

2. Reasons in the persons themselves. Feel they are separated from other classes; neglected, despised, on account of their poverty, &c.

3. Reasons in the world. Seductive temptations, dissipating scenes, especially on Lord's day. So Gospel is not heard and believed. Souls lost. Sin uncured. Crowds perishing.

Application:

1. We appeal to Church of Christ. Great responsibility.

2. Sinners are inexcusable. Every man must give account.

3. God's mercy and grace are all-sufficient.

4. The provisions of the Gospel are freely published.—*Rev. Jabez Burns.*

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER VIII.

Topic: INTERROGATING OUR CONDUCT. *Text:* "*What have I done?*" (ver 6.)

How *attentive* God is to us and our actions! He sees His prodigals when yet a great way off; to Him there is music in our sigh, and beauty in a tear. In this verse He represents Himself as looking upon man's heart, and *listening*—if possibly He may hear something good. And how *amiable* God is, that turns aside, with grief in His heart, exclaiming, "I did listen, but no man spake aright," &c. Never do we have a desire towards God, or breathe a prayer to heaven, but God has been watching and hearkening for it: it was but one tear on the cheek, yet the Father noticed it as a hopeful sign; but one throb went through the heart, yet He heeded it as an omen that not quite hardened by sin. *Text*, "What have I done?" calls for

I. Words of earnest persuasion, urging all, and especially the unconverted, to ask this question, each for himself, and solemnly answer it. Few men like to take the trouble to review their own lives. Like silly ostrich, when hard pressed by hunters, bury their sight from real evils and danger. But remember

1. *Searching yourself can do you no hurt.* Little can be lost by taking stock. You cannot be any worse for a little self-examination. 2. *You may be a great deal better for the process:* for, if your affairs are *all right* with God, you may cheer and comfort yourself; but there are many probabilities that they are *wrong;* so many are deceived, and anything rather than self-delusion. 3. *The time for self-examination is short:* soon you will know the secret, death will rend off the mask. 4. *Though you may deceive yourself, you cannot God.* The everlasting Jehovah will grasp the balances of justice, put His law in one scale and the sinner in the other: "Weighed and found wanting!"

Various excuses will arise to check this inquiry: you will plead you are members of churches, have often received the sacramental bread and wine. Easy thing in this age to make profession of religion. Christ had one hypocrite in His twelve! Rest on no *profession.* Neither put off this question because *too busy* to attend to spiritual concerns. Know not how near death is to thee. May the Lord prepare each for death and judgment by leading all to ask, "What have I done?"

II. Words of assistance in trying to answer the question.

1. To *Christians:* "What hast thou done?" You reply, "Nothing to *save myself;* that was done for me. Nothing to *make a righteousness* for myself; Christ said, It is finished! Nothing to *merit heaven;* Jesus did that for me before I was born!" Yes; but say, What hast thou *done for Him?* for *His Church?* for the *salvation of the world?* to promote *thine own spiritual growth in grace?*

2. To *moralists:* "What hast thou done?" You answer, "All I ought to have done! You may tell me of sins, but I have done my duty: observed Sabbath, said prayers, given to poor, &c.; and if good works have any merit, I have done a great deal!" True, *if* any merit; but very unfortunate that they have not, for our good works, if we do them to save ourselves by them, are no better than our sins. Christ will never go shares with you in the work of salvation. Your morality is no help to you whatever as to eternal things.

3. To *the worldly:* "What done?" "It is very little I do amiss; now and then just a little mirth." Stop; let us have the right name for that mirth. What do you call it in any one else? "*Drunkenness.*" "I have been a little loose in talk sometimes!" Write it down, "*Lascivious conversation.*" Sometimes you have been out on the Sabbath? "*Sabbath-breaking.*" You may have quoted texts of Scripture to make jokes of them, and used God's name in foolish talk? "*Swearing.*" Did you ever adulterate in your trade? "*Stealing.*" Wished you could get your neighbour's prosperity? "*Covetousness, which is idolatry.*" Ever really prayed? "*Prayerlessness.*" Neglected God and Bible? "*Despising Him.*" Few but will feel these sins lie at their door. May the Spirit touch your consciences, and convince you of your sins!

4. To *the unconverted:* "What done?" By your sins you have *destroyed your soul, resisted the gospel, spurned Christ.* Yes; and think what you have done *to your children:* taught them the ways of spiritual ruin. To *your companions:* tempted some to take the first stray step into folly, indulgence, iniquity. Doth not your heart quail within you because of *self-ruin* and *ruin of others?*

III. Words of **affectionate admonition** to those who have had to answer the question against themselves.

1. Solemn that the years roll on and *yet you are unsaved.* You, not altogether hardened, yet "*done*" nothing to determine for Christ, and lay hold on eternity. 2. There will be a time when you will ask the question, but *it will be too late.* "On the *death*-bed?" No, not too late there; but when breath has gone out of your body. After the suicide has taken the fatal leap, he may cry, "What have I done?" but too late! Some mocking spirit in mid-air echoes, "Lost, lost, lost!" In the *dreadful judgment,* too, the soul will ask that question, as the eye of the Judge fixes itself upon him: He turns to your page in the book, but it has never been blotted with His blood. If you only knew what they feel, and could see what they endure, who have lost opportunity and lost themselves, you would, ere too late, pause and ask, "What have I done?" As immortal spirits, bound for endless weal or woe, fly ye to Christ, seek for mercy at His hand, trust in Him, and be saved.—*Spurgeon.* (Comp. Addenda to chap. viii. 6, "*Self-interrogation.*")

Topic: THE RAVAGES OF SIN: A PATHETIC REMONSTRANCE. *Text:* "*Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*" (ver. 22).—(Addenda, "*Balm of Gilead.*")

"Astonishment" (ver. 21) over "health not recovered" (ver. 22) is followed by lament for "the slain" (ix. 1). (1.) *Between the two there is a distinction:* "health" lacking, the soul diseased, impotent, suffering, prostrate, perishing, but *not* "slain." (2.) *Between the two there is a connexion;* let the disease go unchecked, unhealed, the plague not stayed, and the issue will be—the suffering victim of sin "slain." That sad word "slain" suggests the destroyer's work done;

the ruin of the "daughter of my people" is complete. Therefore, the prophet lifts his voice in the cry of anguish in which there sounds no strain of hope (ix. 1). But, in this text, the case is less severe; the malady rages, but recovery is possible, "health may be restored." To such as have lost spiritual health, and all as yet unsaved, come the hopeful tidings of "balm in Gilead and a physician there." Four topics:

I. A malady. "Health not recovered:" needed "balm and physician."

The malady which has devastated the health of humanity is sin. What is sin but a disease of soul? Analogy:

1. *In the manner of its development.* Disease *lies concealed* in blood before it assumes visible signs. Began in *thought*, grew into a *desire*, advanced into an *intention*, issued in *act*.

2. *In the rapidity of its progress.* Bursts forth into fierce forms, whole system inflamed. Malady quickly spreads through the whole nature, vitiating mind, corrupting character, consuming goodness, till "yield members to uncleanness, and from iniquity unto iniquity."

3. *In its contagious influence.* Springs from one to another, speeding and spreading misery and death. Plague of London started from one person. So, "by one man sin entered into world," &c. Broke out in Eden, pervaded earth, &c. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." "One sinner destroyeth much good."

4. *In its fatal termination.* Unless arrested, disease soon completes its ravages, and victim sinks to the dead. And what the termination of sin? "Wages of sin is death." "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth *death*."

II. A remedy. "Balm in Gilead." Remedy equal to the disease, for "health" might have been "recovered."

Gilead a mountain; balsam trees flourished; gum had medicinal properties, highly valued and widely celebrated. Thus extracted: Incision with axe or spear; issues a glutinous sap. Concerning its virtues, ancient botanists and physicians eloquent in praise.

Led by analogy from Gilead to *Calvary;* from balsam-tree to *Cross;* from issuing sap to *Blood;* from incision by axe to "with spear pierced His side." Concerning its healing virtues, ten thousand times ten thousand tongues eloquent. "Health restored:" in heaven, never more sick!

1. *It was highly precious.* So valued that Pompey and Titus carried some back with them to Rome. "Precious blood of Christ."

2. *It had peculiar properties.* Healing virtues in "balm" special to it. "Makes wounded spirit whole, calms troubled breast."

3. *It was easily obtained.* Readily flowed forth. "Seek, and ye shall find." "Whosoever call on name of Lord shall be saved."

4. *It was effectual in its operation.* "Whole head may be sick," &c. Yet healing virtue therein. "Though sins be as scarlet," &c.

> "Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
> Shall never lose its power."

III. A healer. There is "a physician there." This a name which Jesus assumed: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

1. *He is acquainted with the nature of the disease.* Knows the cause of its commencement, mode of development, phases it assumes, issues to which it leads. Knows seat of disease, and how to assail it: "Out of heart proceed evil thoughts," &c. Familiar with the malady and mode of treatment.

2. *He is skilful in administering the remedy.* Has had long experience and

extensive practice. Every land, every age. "He went about doing good, and *healing all manner of diseases and sickness* among the people. (Comp. Rom. vii. 24, 25.)

3. *He is willing to afford relief.* Never wearied, "waits to be gracious;" "desires not death of sinner, but that all come to repentance;" chides with the dying, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," assures, "I will in no wise cast out."

4. *His ability to heal is widely attested.* In *our midst:* "Ye are washed," &c. *In heaven:* "Great multitudes; made white in blood of Lamb."

IV. A remonstrance. "Why their health not recovered?" Many unhealed; what the explanation?

1. *Some urge that they are not suffering from any malady.* Not deny existence and ravages of sin as general truth, but repudiate charge of personal corruption, infection, and peril. Thus put "balm" and "physician" from them. For that is the issue; if men are not fatally diseased, Christ came not for them; they have no place in His redemptive mission. Because of this folly—ignoring their need of the Divine remedy—"health is not recovered."

2. Others urge that *they are not in a condition of serious danger.* Admit personal sin, need remedy, but no occasion for alarm; they "know not that they are wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." Delusion is a symptom of this malady of sin. "They hold fast deceit" (ver. 5). And because of this self-flattery "health is not recovered."

3. Others urge *that they can secure healing at any time.* Dreadful procrastination! Deliberate trifling with grace. Surely there is no certainty of finding salvation just when men determine. Death waits not upon our convenience. Melancholy presumption. Yet because of it "health is not recovered."

4. Others urge *that they are too near perishing for recovery.* Write hard things against themselves. (See ver. 20.) But what state surpasses the Almighty Physician? Have any proved Him unable? "Able to save to uttermost." Yet because of despair "health is not recovered."

Sorrow for misery, surprise at hesitancy, indignation over trifling, remonstrance with despair—all are expressed in this plaintive interrogation, "*Why, then,* is not health recovered?" There is "balm," a "physician," and, therefore, "*health*" for all, for "sinners, even the chief." "He healed all them that had need of healing."

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER VIII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. GRAVES DISTURBED: DEAD MOLESTED. Dr. Pusey writes of this sacrilege, that it was "a hatred carried beyond the grave, a hatred which is a sort of impotent grasping at eternal vengeance, hatred which, having no power to work any real vengeance, has no object but to show its hatred." (Note on Amos ii. 1.)

"He (David) was buried by his son Solomon in Jerusalem, with great magnificence, and with all the other funeral pomp which kings used to be buried with; moreover, he had great and immense wealth buried with him, the vastness of which may be easily conjectured at by what I now say: for 1300 years afterwards, Hyrcanus, the high priest, when he was besieged by Antiochus, and was desirous of giving him money to get him to raise the siege, and draw off his army, and having no other method of compassing the money, opened one room of David's sepulchre, and took out 3000 talents, and gave part of that sum to Antiochus, and by this means caused the siege to be raised. Nay, after him, and that many years, Herod, the king, opened another room, and took away a great deal of money."—*Josephus, Antiq.* bk. vii. chap. xv. § 3.

"For extremity of despite also, dead men's bones have been digged up. Pope Formosas was so dealt with by his suc-

cessor, Stephanus VI.; and many of the holy martyrs by their barbarous persecutors."—*Trapp.*

Ver. 3. DEATH DESIRED.

"To die,—to sleep,
No more; and, by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished." —*Shakespeare.*

"Death! to the happy thou art terrible,
But how the wretched love to think of thee!
O thou true comforter, the friend of all
Who have no friend beside!"
—*Southey.*

"A sleep without dreams, after a rough day
Of toil, is what we covet most; and yet
How clay shrinks back from more quiescent clay!"
—*Byron.*

"Soon may this woe-worn spirit seek the bourne
Where, lulled to slumber, grief forgets to mourn." —*Campbell.*

Ver. 5. PERPETUAL BACKSLIDING. "They fall deepest into hell who fall backwards into hell."—*Bunyan.*

"Errare humanum est; perseverare diabolicum."—*Trapp.*

Ver. 6. SELF-INTERROGATION. "What have I done?" The Pythagoreans once a day put this question to themselves. It is reported of Sextus that every night before he slept, he asked of his own heart, "What evil hast thou this day amended? what vice hast thou shunned? what good hast thou done? in what part art thou bettered?"

"As it is an evidence that those tradesmen are embarrassed in their estates who are afraid to look into their books; so it is plain that there is something wrong within, among all those who are afraid to look within."—*Secker.*

Thales, the Milesian philosopher, flourished about A.M. 3330, and was contemporary with Josiah, king of Judah, and Jeremiah, our prophet; and he it was who gave birth to the wise admonition which was the basis of his philosophic teaching, "*Know thyself.*" Cicero, however, ascribes the maxim to Apollo himself, "because," he says, "it hath such weight of sense and wisdom in it as appear too great to be attributed to any man." It was emblazoned in golden letters over the door of the temple of Apollo at Delphos.

Ver. 7. "*Stork.*" The same individuals return to the same place year after year.

"The stork-assembly meets; for many a day
Consulting deep and various, ere they take
Their arduous voyage through the liquid sky.
And now, their route designed, their leaders chose,
Their tribes adjusted, cleaned their vigorous wings,
. . . . in congregation full
The figured flight ascends, and riding high
The aerial billows, mixes with the clouds."
—*Thomson.*

"*Turtle.*"

"The dove let loose in eastern skies,
Returning fondly home,
Ne'er stoops to earth her wing, nor flies
Where idle warblers roam.
But high she shoots, through air and light,
Above all low delay,
Where nothing earthly bounds her flight,
Nor shadow dims her way."
—*Moore.*

"*Crane.*" Homer (*Iliad*, iii. 2, 3) alludes to the harsh sound of the crane in her flight:

"The Trojans indeed advanced, with both clang and shout like birds,
Just in fact as is the noise of cranes in front of the sky."

"*Swallow.*" Its instinct is more true than man's reason or faith.

"Bright bird of summer, what joys are thine!
Voice of the spring, if thy wings were mine,
My merry course should be with thee
To the orange grove and the banyan tree;
For who would dwell in the wintry chill,
And the gloom and cares of this world of ill,
If he could borrow thy wings, and stray
In chase of the summer, with thee away?"
—*Anon* (*See Gray's "Topics."*)

"*Crane and swallow.*" It is agreed by all philologists that our translators interchanged the words, and that in each case it should be "swallow and crane," not "crane and swallow." *Soos*, or *sis*, rendered "swallow," scarcely can mean the swallow, for though a migrant it is hardly so in Palestine as to justify these words, "*the swallow observes the time of its coming.*" But the difficulty was solved, says Dr. Tristram, when we found that *soos* is to the present day the vernacular or provincial, though not the classical, Arabic name of the *swift*; and when we noted that, unlike the swallows, the swifts return to Palestine on a sud

den in one day, and cover the land ir countless myriads.—*Sunday at Home.*

Ver. 8. SACRED WISDOM. *Needed.* Varro, a Roman writer of the first century B.C., states that in his day he had been at the pains to collect the various opinions on the question, "What is the true object of human life?"—in other words, "What is the supreme good?" He had reckoned up as many as *three hundred and twenty* different answers! How needful is Divine revelation!—*Biblical Treasury.*

"LYING PEN OF THE SCRIBES." The mention of *Scribes* in this place is a crucial point in the argument whether or not the Pentateuch or Torah is the old law-book of the Jews, or a fabrication which gradually grew up, but was not received as authoritative until after the return from captivity. It is not until the time of Josiah that we find Scribes mentioned, except as political officers; here they are *students of the Torah.* But the Torah must have existed in writing before there could have been an order of men whose especial business it was to study it; and therefore Ewald, Hitzig, Graf, and others explain the verse away by saying that perhaps the Scribes were writers of books, and had published collections of false prophecies written in imitation of the true. But the *Torah of Jehovah* is mentioned in this very verse, and the whole gist of the passage is lost if what the Scribes turned into a lie was *anything except that law,* of which they had just boasted that they were the possessors. . . . Jeremiah's whole argument depends upon the fact that there were in his days men who claimed to be "*wise*," or rather *learned* men, because of their study of the Pentateuch, and is certainly inconsistent with the assumptions of the new critics, that Jeremiah wrote the book of Deuteronomy, and that Ezra wrote parts of Exodus and the whole of Leviticus.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Ver. 14. DEFIANCE ISSUING IN DESPAIR. Francis Spira, an Italian apostate, exclaimed on his deathbed, "My sin is greater than the mercy of God! I have denied Christ voluntarily. I feel now that *He hardens me,* and *allows me no hope!*" *Hobbes,* the infidel, before death, "I am taking a fearful leap into the dark."

Ver. 18. BITTER LAMENTATIONS for others' ruin. When our Redeemer wept over the city that was to perish, He considered it the more to be deplored as it knew not itself its deplorable condition. As many, therefore, as are set on fire by the torch of love weep over other men's sins as if they were their own. St. Augustine says, "We mourn over the sins of others, we suffer violence, we are tormented in our minds." St. Chrysostom says that Moses was raised above the people because he habitually deplored the sins of others. "He," says the same holy doctor, "who sorrows for other men's sins, has the tenderness of an apostle, and is an imitator of that blessed One who said, 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?'"—*F. W. Faber.*

Ver. 20. "*Harvest is past.*" OPPORTUNITY LOST. "The mill can't grind with the water that is lost." Opportunities are importunities. Col. iv. 3, is literally "buying up the opportunity."

One of the most ingenious tortures of the Hohenslaufen family, in the height of their despotic control, was that of a cell which, at the prisoner's first entrance, presented an air of comfort and ease; so that it was not till he had been a few days confined that he observed the dimensions of his chamber beginning to contract. But the discovery once made, the fact became more appalling every day. Slowly but terribly, the sides drew closer, and the unhappy victim was crushed to death. What an emblem does this suggest of the sinner's contracting day of grace! Oh, what would the poor victim in such a cell have given to see the door open, and hear a voice, "Escape for thy life!" Would that sinners would escape as eagerly by the door of grace!—*Bowes' "Illustrative Gatherings."*

"Many do with opportunities as children do at the seashore; they fill their little hands with sand, and then let the grains fall through one by one till all are gone."—*T. Jones.*

Ver. 22. BALM OF GILEAD. Gilead, where the balm was found, was on the

wilderness side of promised land; the true Balm of Gilead—Jesus Christ—is for our healing *here*, before we pass over Jordan. Men *travelled far* to get it, bought it at *great price;* but Jesus is nigh to heal us, and restores us "without money and without price." Merchants *conveyed the balm* far and wide; missionaries travel far to make the free gift. The balsam tree had to be cut, pressed, &c., to yield the balm; Christ was "wounded" and "bruised" (Isa. liii. 5). The supply of balm almost exhausted: Christ the same for ever.—"*Topics.*"

Alexander the Great was dying of a wound, which did not seem very dangerous at first, but it baffled his physicians, and was rapidly becoming mortal. One night, however, it is said, he dreamed that some one had brought him a peculiar-looking plant, which, when applied to the festering sore, had cleansed and closed it. In the morning, when he awoke, he described the plant; and the historian informs us that it was sought for and found, and when applied to the wound, the fiery pain subsided, and he was speedily healed. Now your soul has received a deadly hurt; it has been stung by the old serpent, the devil. The wound gets worse. There is a tender plant which is able to heal you—it is the Balm of Gilead.—*Dr. James Hamilton.*

Compared with the virture and preciousness of the redeeming grace of Jesus, whose blood cleanses us from all sin.

"Not balm, new bleeding from the wounded tree,
Nor bless'd Arabia with his spicy grove,
Such fragrance yields." —*Rowe.*

So highly prized was the balsam that, during the war of Titus against the Jews, two fierce contests took place for the balsam orchards of Jericho, the last of which was to prevent the Jews from destroying the trees, which they would have done, in order that the trade might not fall into the enemy's hand.

Not a root nor a branch of the balsam-tree is now to be found in all Palestine.

Twice was a balsam-tree exhibited in triumph to the Romans in their streets. The first time was B.C. 65, when Pompey returned from his conquest, and Judea became a Roman province; and the last time was after a lapse of 144 years, when the spoils of the temple of Jerusalem were borne in triumph through the imperial city, and, as a sign of the subjection of the whole country, the precious balm-tree was exhibited with pride by Vespasian.

Bruce saw the balsam-tree in Arabian valleys. The most considerable gardens of them is in a recess of the mountains, between Mecca and Medina.

The balm of Gilead is a small evergreen; at five feet from the ground it branches out something like an old hawthorn; bark is smooth, shining, of a whitish grey colour, with brown blotches; leaves are of a bright green, foliage is scanty and rugged. The greatest quantity of balsam flows from the wounded bark; but there are three kinds procured by art; best is the *opobalsam*, expressed from the green berry; second, from the ripe nut or berry; the last is obtained by bruising and boiling the young wood.—*Scripture Herbal.*

The balm of the soul is *prayer*, saith the Chaldee paraphrast; is *repentance*, saith Jerome; is *Christ* applied by faith, say we. *Sanguis medici est curatio phrenetici.*—*Trapp.*

CHAPTER IX.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES. For Chronology and History, see chap. vii.

1. Geographical References. Ver. 26. "*Egypt:*" sit. on N.E. angle of Africa; a vast plain; in general features it may be regarded as the valley of the Nile, by which river it is nourished; the country anciently divided into two great divisions, Upper and Lower Egypt; subdivided into smaller sections called *Nomes*, or provinces; now divided into *Lower Egypt*, called Delta (because enclosed within the arms of the Nile, resembling a Greek Δ); stretching about 80 miles inland from Mediterranean. *Central Egypt*, extending *cir.* 150 miles further south: *Upper Egypt*, which reaches *cir.* 250 miles still farther from the Mediterranean, where

the First Cataract forms its natural boundary. Common Bible name of the land is *Mizraim*, ancient Egyptian name, inscribed in hieroglyphics, is KEM. Contains 115,200 square geological miles. "*Edom*," or Idumea: a district north of the peninsula of Sinai, itself bounded on the north by Moab, "a narrow, mountainous tract (about 100 miles long by 20 broad), extending along the eastern side of the Arabah."—*Dr. W. Smith.* "*Ammon:*" originally the "children of Ammon" located themselves, together with Moabites, west of the Jordan, the Jabbok (midway between Sea of Galilee and Dead Sea) was anciently the northern border-line of their territory, and the Arnon (which flows into the Dead Sea nearly opposite to Engedi) the southern limit. In Jeremiah's time they were in possession of the cities of Gad (south of the Arnon), from which Tiglath-Pilesar had removed the Jews (Jer. xlix. 1–6). "*Moab*," occupied the plain of the Jordan-valley on the eastern side of the Dead Sea; afterwards spread themselves south of Judea towards Idumea. But the boundary lines of Ammon and Moab were continually shifting; hence their localisation can only be indicated, not determined. "All that are in the *utmost corners*, that dwell *in the wilderness*." (See *Lit. Crit.* on these words, "utmost corners," below). Arabian tribes who resided in the desert S.E. of Palestine.

2. Natural History. Ver. 11. "*Dragons*," תַּנִּים; evidently "dragons" is a wrong interpretation, for serpents do not invade ruined cities, and make "dens" amid the "heaps;" the *jackal* is meant, whose habit is to prowl amid rocky places and ruins; size about that of a fox, but legs longer; colour, yellowish grey, with dark shades about the back; voice, hideous, a mingled bark and howl; generally jackals go in great troops (Maunder). Ver 15. "*Wormwood*," לַעֲנָה (Laănâh); several species in Palestine; Kitto specifies four: *Artemisia nilotica, judaica, fruticosa*, and *cinerea;* all distinguished for intense bitterness, and probably not only nauseous but hurtful (Deut. xxix. 18; Prov. v. 4; Amos v. 7, vi. 12). "*Water of gall.*" See Nat. Hist. on viii. 14, *supra*.

3. Manners and Customs. Ver. 2. "*In the wilderness a lodging place.*" A caravanserai, usually a large, square building (khan), erected in deserts and regions far removed from towns, on the route of caravans, either at the public expense or by private charity; they are mere shelters for the night, without furniture, comfort, or supplies, and generally filthy and abound in vermin. Ver. 3. "*Bend* their tongues like *their bows*," properly, they *tread* their bow, *i.e.*, to string it—the bow being held by the foot while it is strung. Ver. 7. "I will *melt and try them:*" (See notes on vi. 27). Simile of metal refining: "*smelting*, in order to separate the pure metal from the ore, *testing*, to see if the metal is pure, or still mixed with alloy"—*Speaker's Com.* Ver. 17. "*Mourning women:*" hired mourners, who, by frantic gestures, dreadful wailings, and doleful ditties, both professed grief and incited it in beholders. It demanded some skill to learn these shrieks, and gestures, and dirges, hence here described as "*cunning* women." Jerome says the custom continued in Judea down to his days (*Obit.* A.D. 420). Lane states that it still exists in Egypt ("Modern Egyptians"); and Calmet, that the practice prevails in most of the provinces of the Levant. Ver. 20. "*Teach your daughters wailing:*" see above, ver. 17: the dead would be so numerous as to call for a much larger number of "mourning women" than at present were available; hence, train others in readiness for the appalling crisis. Ver. 22. "*The handful after the husbandman;*" *i.e.*, the bundle of corn which the reaper cuts into his arm with a few strokes of his sickle, and which another who follows him "gathers," to bind with several other such "handfuls" into a sheaf. Ver. 25. "*Circumcised with the uncircumcised:*" considerable difficulty among commentators as to whether the prophet asserted that circumcision was practised among the nations specified in ver. 26; among which "Judah" is classed in this respect. Lange contends this is meant, and appeals to authority of *Herodotus*, who affirms that the practice existed both among the higher castes of Egyptians, and the Arabian tribes—probably Kedarenes descended from Ishmael, who was circumcised by Abraham (Gen. xvii. 23), and among whose descendants the rite still obtains, although the Koran nowhere enjoins the rite: the Edomites accepted circumcision at the dictation of John Hyrcanus, as the alternative of vacating their country (*Josephus, Antiq.* xiii. 9. § 1). Lange urges that we must accept the prophet's words as affirming that these people specified did practise circumcision. Yet he seems alone in this position, excepting that Jerome asserts that the rite did exist among these nations. It seems simple to accept the general verdict that these people are not all affirmed as circumcised, but that "circumcised" and "uncircumcised" indiscriminately are grouped together as forming the list of nations on whom God's judgments would soon descend.

Literary Criticisms. Ver. 1. should be joined to chap. viii., it is so in Heb. Bibles. Ver. 3. "*Not valiant for truth:*" Lange, "not by truth do they prevail in the land." Keil, "not according to faithfulness do they manage in the land." *Speaker's Com.*, "neither do they rule faithfully in the land." Maurer, "they do not prevail by truth" (Ps. xii. 4). Ver. 8. "As an *arrow shot out:*" חֵץ שׁוֹחֵט, a slaughtering arrow. "*In heart he layeth his wait:*" properly inwardly he layeth his ambush: אֹרֶב = insidious scheming. Ver. 10. "*habitations* of the wilderness:" *i.e.*, prairie, pasturage, encampment of the shepherds: the reference being probably to the *wilderness of Judea*, where cattle were pastured (*cf.* 1 Sam. xvii. 28). Ver. 19. "*Our dwellings have cast us out:*" "dwellings" is not the nominative, but "they," the enemies, who

have *thrown down our dwellings* (*cf.* 2 Kings xxv. 9). Ver. 26. "*All in the utmost corners:*" *Margin*, "Heb. *cut off into corners*, or, *having the corners* (of their hair) *polled.*" *Speaker's Com.*, all who have the corners of their hair shorn. Hend., Cut as to the corner of the beard (*cf.* Lev. xix. 27, xxi. 5), a custom the Jews were prohibited to imitate. The description points to the Arabs, who "dwell in the wilderness."

HOMILETIC ARRANGEMENT OF THE ENTIRE CHAPTER IX.

*** Sectional divisions of the chapter does violence to its structure and disorder; for its very confusion of topics, the intermingling of solemn messages with passionate exclamations, is characteristic of vivid dread and poignant grief; of these the chapter is full. Sections might, however, arranged thus:

Verses 1–8. Plaintive lamentations over sin.
,, 9–16. God's vindications of His judgments
,, 17–22. Vivid realisation of calamities.
,, 23–26. Vainglorious confidences corrected.

The scope and significance of the *entire chapter* may be thus stated: Jeremiah presents to Judah:

1. A vivid portrayal of the direful disasters impending.
2. A justification of God's judgments against sin.

By showing them how alarming would be the punishment, he would have them see how appalling was their sin. Their condition and conduct imprecated the retribution. Noticeable that appeal is made to the *wisdom*, the serious thought of his hearers, that they may "understand" (ver. 12) the equity of God's proceedings against them. Sinners would justify God's punishments if they wisely considered their case, demerits, and the provocations of their sins: "We indeed *justly*, for we receive the due reward of our sins."

I. Sorrowful consternation over calamities. Both the *revolting cause* of these calamities (vers. 2–6) and their *poignant severity* (vers. 20–22) are carefully specified: thus the bemoaning is intelligently and adequately justified.

1. *The prophet's agony of grief* (vers. 1, 2). Note the pathos of the reiteration, "my people!" Humanity, philanthropy, patriotism, and religious feeling, all summon us to bitter sorrow over—(1) the *sufferings* of our people; (2) the *slaughter* wrought by tyranny (especially the tyranny of Satan over the lives and souls of men; and the slaughter of virtue, happiness, and hope); (3) the *sinfulness* which underlies and explains all man's woes. Characters wasted, lives degraded, hearts pierced with anguish, souls ruined: a sad world; the gentle, generous heart shudders amid these devastations, "weeps for the slain."

2. *The people's realisation of their ruin* (vers. 17–19). It came late, yet it came: they awoke at last. God arrests the insensate nation with the appeal, "Consider ye!" The verses delineate the people's (1) *sudden consternation*; (2) *overwhelming distress*. i. Professional mourners would have abundant occasion for wailing (ver. 17). ii. The people would themselves be plunged into the agony of sorrow (ver. 18). We cannot leave to others the bitter mourning, the pang in our hearts will be too keen. iii. Zion would resound with cries of anguish and desperation (ver. 19). Sinners, though *slow to recognise* their dreadful state and prospects, are *sure to realise* them (ver. 25). Because doom now tarries they make merry while godly men weep; but they will join the lamentations, though (alas! if as here) only when too late, when ruin is upon them (ver. 19).

3. *God summons the nation to grievous sorrow* (ver. 20–22). 1. He supplies the mourners with *the national dirge* (ver. 21), than which no more piteous a refrain could be conceived. 2. He then portrays *the awful disasters* (ver. 22): death in every home,—the slain covering the lands, childhood and youth perishing with the "men." Judgment comes on all, "for that all have sinned." When God bids us sorrow, it is time to "consider" and humble ourselves penitently before Him. "Now He hath commanded men everywhere to repent." A wide difference be-

tween this "godly sorrow" and the grief of despair and doom. Timely penitence may avert ultimate desperation. Predictions of disaster are intended as persuasives to the sorrow which averts woe.

II. Appalling corruption of the nation (ver. 2–6, 8).

1. *As viewed by the prophet* (ver. 2–6). He would fain hide himself from the sickening and revolting spectacle of his people's guiltiness (ver. 2). (*a.*) They were *foul and false* (ver. 2); (*b.*) *maliciously deceptive*, "tongues like bows" (ver. 3); (*c.*) *careless of public honour and faith*, "not valiant for truth" (see *Lit. Crit.* on ver. *supra*); (*d.*) *abandoned to iniquitous practices*, "proceed from evil to evil;" (*e.*) *ignore God in His own land*, "know not Me, saith the Lord;" (*f.*) *social confidence and integrity violated* (ver. 4), utterly insincere, treacherous, and unjust in their domestic and neighbourly intercourse; (*g.*) *their falsity was deliberate and resolute* (ver. 5), they actually trained themselves to lying, and defiantly refused to speak or act truthfully; (*h.*) *evil-doing exhausted all their powers*, "they weary themselves," &c., leaving them incapable of anything else.

2. *As estimated by the Lord* (ver. 6, 8). For His eyes are upon, and His eyelids try, the children of men. Note: God marks what are the surroundings of His servants: "I know where thou dwellest" (Rev. ii. 13). "Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit." Their case before God showed (1.) *criminal falsity;* (2.) *determined repudiation of God* in order to practise "deceit" (ver. 7); (3.) *cruel treachery* (ver. 8). Observe: How severely God regards the violation of *social laws;* wrong done by man to man, sins of the tongue, faithless conduct, scheming selfishness. Yet, further, men fall away *from God* as their first stage of decline: it therefore argues their complete degradation when they become avowedly *false to their fellow-men*,—indicates utter moral corruption, loss of every virtue and of all worth.

3. *Yet condoned by themselves* (ver. 23–26). They neglected "loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness" (ver. 24), despised what God "delighted in," and then gloried in their "wisdom, might, and riches" (ver. 23). More: they relied upon the *value of a rite*, "circumcision" (ver. 25, 26), as a guarantee against being abandoned by God and consigned to heathen conquest. 1. *Our own resources* ("wisdom, might, riches") will not protect us from hostile invasion. God menaced Judah with the Chaldean scourge because of their perfidious impiety, their neglect of "loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness;" Judah instantly comforted herself with looking at her resources of wisdom, might, and wealth. 2. *Our religious professions* (reliance on the covenant of circumcision) afford no answer to the denunciation against our sins, nor any excuse for them. Having violated practical piety—"loving-kindness, judgment, righteousness, and *knowing God*"—their vaunted circumcision would not protect them from the doom: they were "uncircumcised in heart."

III. God's vindication of His judgments. He does not leave it to His prophet to "justify the ways of God with men:" Himself expounds the righteousness of His proceedings.

1. *The judgments delineated.* The country devastated (ver. 10). Jerusalem destroyed (ver. 11). Cities desolated (ver. 11). Life embittered (ver. 15). The people banished and consumed in exile (ver. 16). Zion a scene of spoliation and slaughter (ver. 19, 21). Fields strewn with the unburied slain (ver. 22). God will not respect their covenant distinction (ver. 25, 26) in the impartial visitation of retribution. (1.) God's *punishments* are *far-reaching, vast, majestic*, even as are His mercy and His grace. All His doings are on a scale of stupendous, awful magnitude. "Marvellous are Thy works, O Lord." "Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, *doing wonders.*" (2.) God's punishments are *all-inclusive*, beyond evasion or escape.—leaving for those condemned no refuge.

2. *The judgments imperative.* Note: (1.) His searching purpose (ver. 7); (2.) His necessary severity (ver. 9) Judgments have a twofold purpose: (*a.*) *Corrective:*

"melt and try them," purify some in the fires of affliction: "when Thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants will learn righteousness." This end must be sought, for nothing milder than severe punishments affected them for good. God asks, as if in perplexity, "How shall I do?" &c. Solicitous to secure their spiritual improvement even by the calamities which impended. (*b.*) *Avenging:* for they who will not be reformed must be ruined.

3. *The judgments vindicated.* Jehovah calls upon the thoughtful to ponder and declare "*for what* the land perisheth," &c. (ver. 12). Then follows (1.) The Divine *indictment* (ver. 13, 14): revolt against God's law and service, abandonment to self-indulgence and idolatry. (2.) The Divine *sentence* (ver. 15, 16). Observe: Severity is wholly foreign to God's designs and delight (ver. 24). He *desires* not the death of a sinner, but *delights* in mercy; nevertheless, when all His "loving-kindness" avails nothing with sinners, when they resist His grace and repudiate salvation, there remains only this, "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Yet "God hath *not appointed us to wrath*, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON SUCCESSIVE VERSES OF CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* ANGUISH OF GRIEF OVER SINNERS' RUIN.

I. His vivid anticipation of coming woes. Times were now tranquil; no cry of grief rang through the land. He the *sole weeper!* Like to a Greater, who also was a Lone Weeper; "Hosanas" around Him, revelry in Jerusalem, none dreamt of doom nearing: yet Jesus "beheld the city and wept over it." (1.) Doom is not less real or near because ignored by those who are doomed. (2.) Eyes divinely opened foresee what is hid from the godless.

II. His passionate distress over coming woes. This is natural to the Christian *patriot*, the Christian *pastor*: "I tell you *even weeping*" (Rom. ix. 2). (1.) Sinners ought to be concerned for themselves. (2.) Godliness creates true generosity, — the peril of others embitters the soul.

III. His baffling helplessness before coming woes. He can bemoan them: would readily weep and ceaselessly weep over His people's ruin, but what could avail? He could do nothing to avert the terrible fate. (1.) None can by any means redeem a brother. (2.) Sinners thwart the agonising solicitude of the godly by their own hardened indifference. (3.) Each must deliver his own soul by going himself to the Saviour; pastors and prophets cannot deliver them. They can "weep," but cannot save. Reflection: *What a luxury of joy* there must be in *possessing the power to save!* Jesus has this joy—He only. He obtained it on Calvary. In order to possess it, "He endured the cross, despising the shame." Yet *earnest servants of Christ* will "enter into the joy of their Lord," inasmuch as they have entered into His distress over sinners, and longing to rescue them.

Comments: "It becomes us, while, we are here in this vale of tears, to conform to the temper of the climate, and to sow in tears. . . . While we find our hearts such fountains of sin, it is fit that our eyes should be fountains of tears."—*Henry.* "The meaning is, that the destruction of the people would be so monstrous and dreadful, that it could not be sufficiently bewailed. . . . As he saw that their hearts were inflexible, and that a common way of speaking would be despised, he was constrained to use such similes. Learn what vehemence they ought to use whom God calls to the same office of teaching."—*Calvin.* "From the wish to be utterly dissolved in tears because of the misfortunes of his countrymen, the prophet passes naturally to the wish to flee away from the daily sight of those sins, which were the real cause of their sufferings."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 1, 2. *Theme:* GENUINE PHILANTHROPY.

Jeremiah a devout saint, true patriot,

faithful prophet, model philanthropist. Early Church entertained so exalted an idea of him, that they pictured him as the very type of Him who was the most perfect incarnation of Heaven's tenderness and love. Many in this age who are *philanthropists for trade;* impose on the credulous; they are an offence to genuine souls, and their lives a calumny on the holy cause. Two aspects of genuine philanthropy:

I. Genuine philanthropy melting with earnestness. "Oh, that head waters," &c. He had wept copiously, but would weep more—"Rivers of water" – if thereby serve God and country.

1. Heart intensely earnest concerning *the temporal condition of men.* Chaldean army among them, sword staining the country with blood, groans of the dying and wails of the bereaved: "The slain of the daughter of my people." This distresses him; weeps as patriot over grief of his country. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"

2. Heart intensely earnest concerning *the moral condition of men.* Their carnalities, idolatries, and crimes affect his pious spirit more than physical sufferings and political disasters. He knew *sin* was the cause of all, that *no salvation without removal of sin.* No true philanthropists who not chiefly concerned with souls. "My heart's desire," &c.: see Paul (Rom. x. 1). "Rivers of water . . . because keep not Thy law:" see David (Ps. cxix. 136, xlii. 3). Why all this earnestness *about the soul?* (1.) Think of *the soul in relation to its capacity of suffering and happiness.* (2.) In relation to *the influences for good or evil it is capable of exerting.* (3.) In relation to *its power of being a delight or a grief to the heart of Infinite Love.*

II. Genuine philanthropy sighing for isolation. "Oh, that in wilderness," &c.

1. This is the sigh of *a spiritually vexed soul.* Like Lot in Sodom, the hideous forms of sin every day "vexed his righteous soul." Like David, when "saw transgressors and was grieved." Like Paul at Athens, "spirit stirred" at revolting iniquities which met him at every turn. Natures spiritually refined and ennobled recoil with inexpressible disgust from vanities and crimes of their age.

> "Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
> From strife and tumult far;
> From scenes where Satan wages still
> His most successful war."
>
> —COWPER.

2. This sigh for isolation is the *sigh of disappointed love.* He had worked earnestly and with self-denial to improve the spiritual condition of his country, yet it grew worse, sank deeper in iniquities. Nothing is more saddening to generous souls than the discovery of indifference, ingratitude, and growing vice in the very men they seek to bless. Elijah felt it, and betook himself to a cave; David, and cried, "Oh, that I had wings as of a dove," &c.; Christ, and said, "I have laboured in vain."

There is *danger of a corrupt age exhausting the love* of genuine philanthropists. Instances of loving souls becoming *misanthropic* through the ill-treatment of those whom they endeavoured to serve. A sublime fact that *Christ's philanthropy survived* the fiendish cruelty of the cross, rose with Him from the sepulchre, and despatched a message of mercy to His most malignant enemies at Jerusalem.

Conclusion:

(1.) The *vicariousness* of genuine philanthropy. It inspires the possessor with the spirit that will prompt him to sacrifice his very being for the good of others, to weep himself away. "I would that accursed from Christ for my brethren." All genuine philanthropy bears the sins and sorrows of others.

(2.) The *abuse* of genuine philanthropy. How shamefully was the love of Jeremiah requited by countrymen! The greatest sin in universe is sin against love.

(3.) The *imperfection* of genuine philanthropy. Like the best of every thing human, love is not perfect here. Disheartened, Jeremiah sought *isolation.* At one time we hear him exclaim, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name."—*Homilist.*

N.B.—C. H. Spurgeon used ver. 1 as text for sermon on "INDIA'S ILLS AND ENGLAND'S SORROWS," at the time of the Sepoy mutiny, September 1857.

"Some men sent into this world for the purpose of being the world's weepers. Mankind must have their heroes to express their courage, their philanthropists to live out mankind's philanthropy, their weepers to weep from cradle to grave for the woes of others. If you have tears, these hard times will compel you to shed them now:

"I. For persons actually slain: with murder and bloodshed. Our spirits, harrowed by the most fearful and unexpected cruelty, have felt the ties of kindred very strongly when found our race butchered in the East. England's soldiers tortured; England's daughters dishonoured. Who can read the tale of infamy without tears? Betake ourselves in agonies of prayer to God that He will interpose.

"II. For those morally slain. Sin aboundeth, and iniquity is still mighty. Worse deaths than those inflicted by the sword.

"1. Weep for the *drunkenness* of this land. Thousands every year murdered thereby. My soul might be an everlasting Niobé, perpetually dropping showers of tears, if it might know the doom and destruction wrought by the demon of drunkenness.

"2. Weep for the crime of *debauchery*. 'A shame even to speak of the things done in secret.' Harlots and seducers.

"3. Men are falling by *every sin*, disguised under the shape of pleasure. Ominous theatre notice—'To *the* PIT!'

"In Jeremiah's day Jerusalem was all mirth. They laughed him to scorn. So ye marvel I should weep for *you!* But I foresee the future; see you before the Judge; and the thought of your destruction bids us yield to tears. 'Wages of sin is death.' We weep for *those who have had great privileges*, but have neglected them; and who, having had great privileges, if lost, *must expect greater punishment*. 'More tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah.' Christians! cease not weeping amid prayerful pleadings for those *in your families*, for your *neighbours*, who are yet in the power of sin."—*Spurgeon.*

I. He abandons himself to sorrow, in consideration of the calamitous condition of his people.

II. He abandons himself to solitude, in consideration of the scandalous character and conduct of his people.—*Henry.* (Addenda to chap. ix. 1, "*Fountain of tears;*" ver. 2, "*Solitude.*")

Ver. 3. *Theme:* FALSITY: ITS CRUELTY AND COWARDICE.

It has been wisely said that "every violation of truth is not only a sort of suicide in the liar, but is a stab at the health of human society." Certainly falsity is a two-edged sword; it wounds the deceiver equally with the deceived. Heaven's imprecations are upon, and heaven's gates exclude, "all liars."

Text contains:

I. Two affirmations: the positive side of a sinner's life.

Charges upon these people:

1. Perfidious *words:* speech prostituted to falsity. A grievous crime to use words foully, to pervert speech. Like poisoning a public spring. It is the devil's work; "for he is a liar, and the father of lies." False words are *crafty* (ver. 4), *malicious* (ver. 5), *ruinous* (ver. 8).

"Curse on the coward or perfidious tongue!"
—THOMSON.

"A lie should be trampled on and extinguished wherever found. I am for fumigating the atmosphere when I suspect that falsehood, like pestilence, breathes around me."—*Carlyle.*

"Dare to be true, nothing can need a lie;
A fault which needs it most grows two thereby."
—HERBERT.

2. *Iniquitous deeds.* A transgressor may begin with abusing language, misusing words, speaking deceitfully, covering over his sins by fair speech; but he will soon advance *from words to deeds.* Evil-speakers are always evil-doers. A man who can speak foully can act basely. George Whitfield would fasten his pockets when he heard any one speak ill; because he who could speak wrong could act so; a *liar* can *steal.* As progression from words to deeds is natural, so progression from *evil deeds to greater evils* is inevitable. "From iniquity unto iniquity."

In the case of these people their iniquitous deeds were (*a.*) A violation of mutual obligations *between man and man;* each wronged the other, in the home, in neighbourly intercourse, in commerce, &c. (*b.*) A violation of *Divine obligations;* each revolted from the control and claims of God. These two affirmations give the *positive* and *practical* side of a sinner's life.

II. Two negations: the desolate side of a sinner's life.

There is much in a sinner which we should *desire to be without*, viz., a *lying tongue*, an *evil life*. But he *lacks* much we should *desire to have*, "valour for truth," and "knowledge of God."

1. *Faithless towards men.* Social and civil responsibilities contemned: "Not valiant for the truth," *i.e.*, not energetic to maintain righteousness and fairness. They let order, law, and duty fall into neglect. "Not faithful to their convictions" (*Hitzig*). "Not faithful in their behaviour towards their fellow-men" (*Kiel*). Those who had power in their hands did not use it faithfully for righteous ends. "Not fidelity in their engagements with their fellow-men" (*Speaker's Com.*). Christ's parable of *unjust judge*. "It is indeed proof of impiety when men, *trampling upon faithfulness and equity*, allow themselves every kind of licentiousness" (*Calvin*). Iniquitous persons are scarcely likely to respect social and civil duties; righteousness may have "fallen among thieves," but they are content to "pass by on the other side," intent on "proceeding from evil to evil."

2. *Indifferent towards God.* Sacred realities and Divine claims ignored. "They know not Me, saith the Lord." They are *willingly ignorant* of Him, and they are *necessarily* ignorant of Him; for while they "desire not the knowledge of God's ways," they are also "blinded by the god of this world," "walk in darkness," benighted by their sins. For guilt darkens the soul, deadens the conscience, disables the mind, degrades the life; hence, "they know not Me."

Terrible negation! it means doom: "Whom to know is life eternal." He who shuts from himself the light of God shuts against himself the gates of light and life. "The pure in heart see God."

> "This above all, to thine own self be true;
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."
> —SHAKESPEARE.

See Scripture illustrations of falsity and its issues: *e.g.*, Jacob, Gehazi, Ananias. Truthfulness, like the light, moves in direct lines; and, like the sun's rays, which start from and return to their source, so truthfulness is Divine in its origin and essence, and returns home to Him at last. But falsehood is as a "wandering star," destined to "the blackness of darkness for ever."

Ver. 4. Comments: "*Take ye heed,*" &c. In a state of such utter lawlessness, the bonds of mutual confidence are necessarily relaxed, and suspicion takes its place. The parallel passage in Micah vii. 5, 6, shows that Jeremiah's complaint was not occasioned by his soreness at personal ill-treatment, but was too true a picture of the general faithlessness which existed at Jerusalem. "*Every brother will utterly supplant;*" an allusion to the name of Jacob (Gen. xxv. 26, xxvii. 36; Hos. xii. 3). It might be rendered, Every brother is a thorough Jacob.—*Speaker's Com.*

> "Fratrum quoque gratia rara est."—OVID.

The words are very noticeable: יַעְקֹב עָקֹב. The verb עָקַב is derived from the heel of the foot, and suggests the effort to *trip up* another.

"Since this verb in Kal occurs besides only in Gen. xxvii. 36 and Hos. xii. 4, both times of Jacob, it is certainly probable that the prophet, speaking here of the deceit practised by one brother to another, had this early instance in view."—*Lange.*

Ver. 4. *Theme:* SLANDERING. "*Every neighbour will walk with slanders.*" (Comp. Notes on vi. 28.) (Addenda to chap. ix. 4, "*Slander.*")

I. Unanimity in sowing mischief: "Every neighbour." Virulent treachery.

II. Activity in spreading calumny:

"Will walk," travel about on this nefarious business; "feet run to evil" (Prov. i. 16).

III. Malignity in neighbourly intercourse. This is to use familiarity to murder happiness. "Poison of asps under their lips." "Madmen, casting firebrands, arrows, and death." Such society intolerable, perilous, destructive of all honour and peace.

"The world with calumny abounds,
The whitest virtue slander wounds;
There are whose joy is, night and day,
To talk a character away.

"Eager, from rout to rout, they haste,
To blast the generous and the chaste,
And, hunting reputation down,
Proclaim their triumphs through the town."
—POPE.

Ver. 5. *Theme:* SIN A VIOLENT OUTRAGE ON SELF.

"They have *taught their tongues to speak lies:*" they are artists at it (*Trapp*); make a study of it. i. They are *ingenious* to sin, "have taught their tongues:" implying that through the reluctances of natural conscience they found it difficult to bring themselves to it, but by degrees they have made themselves masters of the art of lying. ii. They are *industrious* to sin, "weary themselves to commit iniquity:" put a force upon their conscience to bring themselves to it, to tire out their convictions by offering them continual violence; are wearied with their sinful pursuits, and yet not weary of them. The service of sin is a perfect drudgery. —*Henry.*

"*Weary themselves:*" are at laborious pains to act perversely.—*Maurer.*

Take the utmost pains to go crookedly.—*Speaker's Com.*

Wrong-doing is an abuse of our nature. A chemist finds it a vexing and thankless attempt to fuse mutually repellant substances, or to mix antagonistic gases. Sin never thoroughly naturalises itself to man's conscience and aptitudes; all along there is a strife within as of conflicting forces. Hence "the way of transgressors is hard;" and "the wicked are like a troubled sea; no peace to the wicked." This a benign fact, testifies of man's nobler calling and destiny, and is an incentive within us to "cease to do evil and learn to do well;" it is, moreover, the preparation in man for Christ's redeeming and reforming grace.

Ver. 6. *Theme:* OUR LOCALISATION MARKED BY THE OMNISCIENT EYE."

I. That *our dwelling-place* is recognised by God.

II. That *our social surroundings* attract the Divine observance.

III. That *the peril and painfulness of our situation* is fully estimated by Him.

IV. That *the struggle it costs us* to live righteously is measured by God in the light of the antagonism and snares which endanger us.

V. That *maintenance of a holy life in unlikely scenes* is the triumph of godly heroism.

VI. That He who recognises our danger will *send adequate grace* to help and proportion *ultimate rewards* to our courageous fidelity (Rev. ii. 13).

"Where duty calls or danger,
Be never wanting there."

Ver. 7. *Theme:* PUNISHMENT CORRECTIVE RATHER THAN RETRIBUTIVE.

I. God's gracious design in our calamities. "I will melt and try them." Even with a people so defiantly impious and utterly corrupt, and even in such calamities as Chaldean overthrow and captivity, God intends good issues, seeks their reform rather than their ruin. Blank punishment for its own sake, justice merely avenging itself on sinners, this is not God-like, not possible. This a sublime truth in all ages, leads some to cherish the "larger hope" of the purifying issues of punishment even upon "the lost,"—those who enter eternity doomed! A dark and solemn mystery.

II. God's distress over the infatuation of sinners. "How shall I do for," &c. 1. That infatuation frustrates His mercy. 2. It compels Him to harsh dealings. 3. It moves Him to reluctant anger. Milder processes were fruitless *tribulation* must now be tried; in their anguish they may repent and return

He will *melt the hardness* of His people in the fire of affliction. Yes, and will *consume the evil* thereby. The exclamation, "How shall I do?" is not (as Hitzig and Graf), *What dreadful forms of judgment shall I summon in vengeance?* Note: "How shall I do *for* the daughter?" God still would find some way of blessing her even when He smites.

III. God's necessary use of severe judgments. "How shall I do for my people?" *i.e.*, "*What else* can I do?" (*Maurer*). How otherwise can I deal with her than to try her in the crucible of suffering? "A corruption so deeply rooted and so widely extended can be removed only by a process of entire melting, which will certainly be grievous, but will also refine. The Lord here asks how He should act if not as here indicated? There is nothing else remaining but to do this" (*Naeg.*). 1. Calamity is God's last resort. 2. Sin must be severely punished. "I will cast them into the fiery crucible of sharp affliction. What can I do less to them, though they are 'My people,' since they are so shamelessly, lawlessly wicked? An unruly patient maketh a cruel physician; a desperate disease must have a desperate remedy" (*Trapp*). Verily, it is right to ask, "If judgment begin *at the house of God* (as here, 'My people'), what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of Christ?" In the melting process, their "deceit" (ver. 6) would soon be consumed, and woful the issue; nothing to resist the "fiery trial which is to try" them! Yet, mayhap, "they themselves might be *saved*, yet *so as by fire*" (1 Cor. iii. 15).

Ver. 8, 9. Ruinous conduct ("tongue, a deadly arrow," &c.), followed by avenging judgment. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (See notes on chap. v. 9, 29.) (Addenda to chap. ix. 8, "*Seductive speech.*")

Ver. 10. An interruption by Jeremiah of Jehovah's address, for ver. 11 continues the Divine utterance of maledictions against this guilty people. Amid God's threats of coming woe, the prophet interposes a piteous and embittered wail over the threatened desolations of his country. (See Homily on chap. iv. 23–26.) The verse is a frightful yet truthful picture of an invaded country wasted by hostile forces.

"*Mountains*," not barren eminences, but fruitful hills, with which Judea abounded.

"*Habitations* of the wilderness," pasture-lands lately occupied by numerous herds, restful and bountiful scenes where *flocks fed* in luxuriance and peace; now "burned up." The Chaldeans would, as is usual in war, burn up the forage and carry off the cattle. And so utterly devastated would these fair and flourishing scenes become, that even *the birds* would take their flight from a land so parched as no longer to furnish them food.

Ver. 11. *Theme:* RUINED JERUSALEM. (Addenda on ver. 11, "*Jerusalem in ruins.*") God proceeds with His decree of desolating judgment. Not only shall the *country be burned*, but the *cities*; yea, *Jerusalem* specially shall be overthrown and become "heaps." Note:

i. **The prophecy, how apparently incredible!** Jerusalem was at that very time a well-fortified city, and filled with valorous people ready to *defend* it as well as to boast of it. Predicted crises always seem incredible; *e.g.*, the *flood*, the doom of *mighty nations*, the coming judgment and *overthrow of the world*.

ii. **The prophet, how courageously invincible!** Standing there in Jerusalem (vii. 2), he proclaimed what *looked impossible*, was certainly *exasperating* to his hearers, was equally *shocking to his own patriotic soul*, and exposed him to no small *animosity and danger*.

(*a.*) *Improbable events very commonly occur*; foolish, therefore, to screen ourselves from danger by that futile delusion.

(*b.*) *Despising God's threatenings does not defeat them:* they come upon mockers, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!"

(*c.*) *Divine heralds may convey tidings which evoke incredulity.* Yet their part

is to proclaim, let men act as they will.

(*d.*) *Intrepidity is a seal and credential to a religious preacher.* It asserts his own assurance of High Authority for his words. But for this, Jeremiah had grown disheartened by indifference and terrified by hostility. But, knowing in Whose name he spake, he "feared not the wrath of the king" nor his malevolent counsellors, but "with all boldness" delivered the tidings of doom.

Ver. 12–16. *Theme:* HUMAN VINDICATION OF DIVINE VENGEANCE.

Words imply that the "wise" would "understand" both the *reason* and the *justice* of the coming judgments, "for what the land perished," *i.e.*, on account of what provocations, and that the punishment was equitable and merited.

I. **Providence acts on manifestly righteous principles.** Fools may not recognise or receive this fact, but very little "wisdom" will avail to vindicate this.

1. *Invariable laws regulate the Divine dispensations in every age.* As with Israel (vii. 12), so would it be with Judah (vii. 15); and similarly with all who act their course.

2. *The issues of human conduct are not obscured from men.* They stand out vividly in the careers of men around us; while history is also full of illustrations: "Well with the righteous; ill with the wicked." There is no equivocation, no uncertainty, no chance respecting these things: every age shows the same.

II. **Human intelligence can recognise the justice of God's ways.**

1. *By natural wisdom.* "Who is the *wise man* that may understand this?" Needed no supernatural revelation to teach that desecration of holy scenes and defiance of holy laws must entail disaster; for unless so, there could be no God judging righteously in the earth. No one but can recognise that sin merits and must bring punishment.

2. *By enlightened wisdom.* For in their case they had "wisdom which is from above," and boasted themselves "wise, *for the law of the Lord is with us*" (viii. 8). We can open the Bible and read the curses against and the consequences of iniquity. Examine "MY LAW, which I have *set before them*" (ver. 13).

III. **Ample justification is furnished for severest judgments.** God Himself gives the explanation (ver. 13, 14). He will allow to none the plea of ignorance. "The wrath of God is *revealed from* heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men."

1. *How vividly our sins are arrayed* before the Lord. Minutely specified by God: "forsaken law," "not obeyed voice," "neither walked therein," "walked after imagination," "walked after Baalim." Our sins are "set in the light of His countenance."

2. *How repugnant our sins are to the holiness of God.* The "land perished," and "none to pass through it" (ver. 12), shows how He will overthrow His chosen habitation rather than connive at guilt.

3. *How provoking our sins are to the mind of God.* He is "*angry* with the wicked." Read that terrifying fact in ver. 15, 16. "Of how much sorer punishment worthy who trampled under foot the Son of God?"

IV. **Direful maledictions forewarn the guilty of their future.**

1. This *forewarning is a merciful fact* It offers time of escape. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish." "Flee for refuge to the hope set before you."

2. *This forewarning is an appalling fact.* "God hath spoken, and He will perform His word." (1.) *Bitter experiences;* "wormwood." (2.) *Destructive calamities;* "water of gall." (See *Literary Notes* and *Homilies* on viii. 14.) (3.) *Banished to their adversaries* (comp. Matt. xxv. 41). (4.) *Escape impossible,* either by flight or in far distance; "I will send a sword after them," &c. When the Lord God, whose eyes are in every place, pursues, He will surely discover and overtake.

Conclusion: *The "wise" should use their wisdom to find redemption* from evidently nearing disasters. "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself." 2. The wise should use their wisdom *to forwarn others to escape,* "that

he may declare it" (ver. 12). "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." Heedlessness is suicidal (Heb. ii. 3); silence is criminal (Ezek. xxxiii. 8).

Ver. 17–22. *Theme:* THE BITTERNESS AND BEMOANINGS OF DEATH. (Addenda to chap. ix. 17, "*Mourning women;*" ver. 21, "*Death.*")

"The citizens of Zion are called upon to give heed to the state of affairs now in prospect, *i.e.*, the judgment preparing, and are to assemble mourning women that they may strike up a dirge for the dead."—*Keil.*

Although the nation was now in no dirge-like mood, but made light of the woful predictions, yet God directs them to arrange their doleful obsequies as though death had already transpired.

I. **The certainty of death's approach.** Though they as yet saw not the grim form, the spectre neared: the "mourning women" would have their melancholy task (ver. 17).

II. **The speed of death's advance** (ver. 18). No time to waste in making preparations: quick, or not ready. This ever true: the interval is brief; therefore "*make haste;*" for death treads upon our heels. "*Weep,*" also, for there is cause.

III. **The ravages of death's desolations** (ver. 19). "Spoiled," "confounded;" enforced desertion of cherished scenes ["forsaken" implies voluntary abandonment, but this was involuntary], driven from dwellings into homeless despair. Analogy of death's work on the ungodly: their resources in which boasted "*spoiled;*" false hopes "*confounded;*" scenes where they fain would have tarried "forsaken," the "tabernacle" they had occupied left. For what? for where? Alas! "voice of wailing is heard" over desolations, and despair attendant upon death.

IV. **The vastness of death's spoliation.** "The harvest of death would be so large that the number of trained women would not suffice."—*Speaker's Com* Therefore ver. 20. The mothers must therefore teach their daughters the melancholy refrain. Note: *young voices* ("daughters") as well as *old* ("ye women") will join in the dirge for the dead; for no age is sacred or screened from death. Evidently from ver. 21 this is *the reason* why the daughters should be taught the wailing cry: they would soon have to lament the loss of "children and young men." None, old or young, would be exempted from mourning.

V. **The variety of death's victims** (ver. 21, 22).

1. *Enters all scenes:* "palaces," "streets" (ver. 21), "open fields" (ver. 22).

2. *Desolates all social ranks:* those who dwell in "palaces" equally with labourers in "streets," and shepherds in "open field."

3. *Strikes down all ages;* "children," "young men," "men."

VI. **The irresistibleness of death's invasions.**

1. *Bolted doors cannot exclude him from our dwellings;* he "comes up into our window."

2. *Fortified palaces are no defence* from his assaults: "enters palaces."

3. *The highways in the city* he invades: where children play, and young men resort.

4. *Lands groan with the burden of the slain* (ver. 22). So dreadful would be the slaughter that the carcases would be left unburied. But what a *great sepulchre* earth is!

Note 1. It was the custom anciently to give a fanciful interpretation to the words "death is come up into our windows"—viz., the *windows are the five senses;* and death "comes in" with the *pleasures admitted* by these "windows."

Note 2. The *degradation to which the body is reduced* is suggested in ver. 22. Just as the Chaldeans would lay all their glory in the dust, and make their beauty loathsome "as dung," so does death turn our comeliness into corruption.

Ver. 21. *Theme:* DEATH AN INVADING ENEMY.

As an enemy:

I. *He is* **cruel.** 1. He strikes at the *dearest objects of our affection.* 2. He robs us of our *most useful men:* patriots, philanthropists, preachers, &c. 3. He drags us from the *dearest things of the heart* · occupation, social circles,

cherished plans, &c. 4. He *reduces our bodies to the dust.* Cruel death! Deaf to the strongest and most piercing cries of social life.

II. *He is* unremitting. Never sheathes his sword; never pauses in march; not an hour that he does not strike a thousand fatal strokes; as restless as the sea; whoever idle, he is active—in every *man*, in every *family*, in every *community*, in every *nation;* busy with all.

III. *He is* subtle. Fights in ambush, steals into the house, touches the food and it becomes poison, breathes into the air and it becomes pestiferous, lays his hand on the heart and it is still. While his victims speak of health, he instils mortal disease; works through the delicate dish and the sparkling wines.

IV. *He is* resistless. Men through ages have tried to resist him; every effort and expedient has failed. All that science, art, wealth, and caution could do failed. Granite castles and royal bodyguards are powerless before him. The mighty warrior drops his sword and becomes dust in his presence.

V. *He is* ubiquitous. No spot on earth where he is not at work. He is in the waves of air, on billows of deep, in valleys, on mountain, river, and brook, forest and flowers; whole earth is his dominion.

VI. *He is* conquerable. "The last enemy shall be destroyed." There is One who will swallow up death in victory: Christ has conquered death. 1. *In His own resurrection.* 2. In His *power upon the minds of His disciples.* "O death, where is thy sting?"—*Homilist.*

Ver. 20, 21. "To be used in times when death snatches many away. i. Who sends Him? ii. Wherefore He is sent? iii. How we may protect ourselves against Him?"—*Naeg. in Lange.*

Ver. 22, 23. *Theme:* HUMAN GLORYING CORRECTED. (Addenda on ver. 23, "*Spurious glorying.*")

The prophet concludes his discourse with a general moral reflection, the object of which is to present *the only means of escape* from such fearfully threatening dangers—viz., a living and truly productive knowledge of the Lord.

I. **The things in which they are not to glory.**

1. Those which *to the natural man seem most desirable*, viz., wisdom, strength (power), riches. (Comp. 1 Kings i. 13, with 2 Chron. ix. 22; Job xii. 13.

2. Those in which these Jews *inclined presumptuously to boast.* Jeremiah had censured their boast of external carnal advantages. (Comp. vii. 4, 8, 10, 14, 24, 26, 28). They gloried *in their wisdom* (viii. 8, 9); in their *strength;* yet lo! (ix. 1) "slain" in their *riches* (ver. 26–28).

The "*wisdom*" in which they are not to glory is not that called "better than strength" (Eccles. ix. 16), and which is identical with that recommended in ver. 23, but *worldly wisdom* (Prov. iii. 5). "*Strength,*" is both physical strength (Ps. cxlvii. 10; Job xxxix. 19), and power (2 Kings x. 34, xx. 20).

II. **Every man must have something in which to glory.**

1. That which *he esteems as his highest blessing and honour.* (Comp. Isa. li. 16; 1 Cor. i. 31; 2 Cor. x. 17).

2. *God sets before us the best objects of glorying.* 1. "*Me;*" both "understood," and "known:" God is to be known as "*the only* true God." 2. *The qualities in which God delights;* mercy, or "*loving-kindness,*" as opposed to their vaunted "strength;" *judgment and righteousness,*" as in distinction from their oppression of the weak and distressed (vii. 5, 6; Ps. cxlv. 17).—*Arranged from Lange.*

Theme: THE CHRISTIAN'S HIGHEST AND TRUE GLORY.

It consists in: i. *Believing in the Lord.* ii. *Living in the Lord.* iii. *Working for the Lord.* iv. *Suffering for the Lord's sake.—Luther, quoted in Lange.*

Theme: THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

i. *Its nature*: not dead science, but living experience.

ii. *Its fruit*: (*a.*) The highest *blessing* (mercy, justice, and righteousness in

Jesus Christ); (*b.*) The highest *honour* (he who has it will not be put to shame, as he who glories in the flesh).—*Naeg.*

i. The wisest and surest reasonings in religion are grounded on the unquestionable perfections of the Divine nature (*e.g.*, belief in Divine Providence and veracity).

ii. The nature of God is the true idea and pattern of perfection and happiness. —*Abp. Tillotson, quoted in Lange.*

"Paul says, 'He that glorieth, let him *glory in the Lord*' (2 Cor. x. 17), and Jesus, 'This is life eternal, that they might *know Thee*, and Jesus Christ,' &c. (John xvii. 3). This is to glory, as though one should say, 'God be praised, I am right well and sound!' To be sound in the faith is to *have* the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to *maintain* it, to *grow* in it. To make a great noise of good works as our own, is ridiculous. For grace produces them, the power of God dwelling in us. We do nothing, and should do nothing if it were left to us; but the work of God in us, that we believe, is not to be passed over in silence, moroseness, and ingratitude. What a noise do humble saints in the Revelation make of their grace, freedom, priesthood, royal dignity, victory, redemption (chaps. iv., v., vii., xii., xiv., xvii., xix.). Oh, that the whole earth were full of our glorying in the Lord!

'Oh, that we were able, our songs so high to raise,
That all the country round might echo with His praise.'

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify the Father in heaven."—*Zinzendorf.*

"Examples of the folly of glorying (or trusting) in *wisdom* (Solomon), *might* (Samson), *riches* (Ahab)."—*Bp. Bull.*

(Comp. Addenda on ver. 33, "*Spurious glorying.*")

Theme: A PROHIBITED AND A SANCTIONED GLORYING.

When Divine punishment for wrong-doing comes upon a people, there is proof made of the powerlessness of wisdom, might, and wealth to do their possessors any good. God refuses to tolerate the conceit of knowledge, strength, or wealth—*His gifts;* instead of glorying in the knowledge of His being and character, in what "*He delights.*

I. The glorying which is prohibited by God.

The tendency and temptation to self-glorification over these things. For "wisdom" is a great good, so also "strength," and "wealth;" but each being the gift of God, the *Giver* is to be gloried in, not the gifts; otherwise the glorying becomes the glorification of self.

1. *Glorying in wisdom is the glorification of self;* therefore forbidden. The mind that knows and the subjects known are both from God. "Knowledge," possessed or contemplated apart from God, "puffeth up;" and so endangers. Scripture commends "wisdom," which glories not in itself, but in God our Saviour. "Christ is the wisdom of God." The law of Christian submission and adoration is that which we are called to follow.

2. *Glorying in strength is forbidden as self-glorification.* Many animals far surpass man in strength. The early history of man exhibits the consequences of glorying in mere physical strength. Giants performed astonishing feats of valour; but the ungigantic David made manifest the weakness of mere bodily bulk and strength. Need to be "strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man." *Sickness corrects* our glorying in the forces of the flesh. History shows God's repudiations of this boast: in destruction of Sennacherib's army, decline and fall of empires founded on mere force, &c. Not self, but "Christ the power of God" must be our glory.

3. *Glorying in wealth is forbidden as self-glorification.* The lust of possession strong in man. Sad to be behold a *spirit entombed* in a mausoleum of gold and silver.

II. The glorying which is Divinely sanctioned. To glory is an instinct in man; is right, therefore, where the object is worthy of him. God here presents *Himself.* There is a *gradation* set before us: God as the object of *under-*

standing; God as the object of *knowledge;* God as the object of *glorying.*

1. *Understanding God.* "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." This common human faculty is a gracious gift of God. Early education calls it into *exercise;* events of life afford it *discipline;* profound spiritual verities may be *by it examined.* Man may understand God! By Divine inspiration even the uncultivated mind may be in communion with Eternal Love.

2. *Knowing God.* This is more than "understanding" Him. "Life eternal to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." Our filial relation to God in Christ is the true ground of our knowledge of Him. Deeply blessed is the knowledge of Christ, for it is the knowledge of God incarnate. Eternity will reveal new deeps of God's eternal love and being.

3. In the understanding and knowledge of God, *the spirit of man glories, and may glory for ever.* God glories in our glorying in Him. That which a man glories in truly *intimates his character.* He who glories in music or art *continually occupies himself in it.* Thus day and night the soul delights in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion: Let us rightly *estimate our being* and our *possessions in Christ.* Because we are what we are, we are forbidden to glory in anything beneath our God.—*Rev. W. R. Percival, from "Homilist."*

Comments: "Wisdom"—*political sagacity;* as if *it* could rescue from the impending calamities. "Might"—*military prowess.* "Riches"—*accumulated wealth;* none of which boasted resources, nor all combined, would prove a means of defence, and their confidence in them would be a snare. Well would it be for them to abandon hope in these futile gloryings, and seek refuge and protection in God, which they might do by obedient and reverent regard to those duties in which He "delights."

"Understandeth me"—*theoretically;* "knoweth me"—*personally, experimentally, and practically.*

"Loving-kindness"—God's *mercy* is put in the forefront, since that alone can save us from fleeing in fear from His presence; "Judgment" towards the rebellious who will not submit; "Righteousness," His faithfulness to His gracious promises, to all who take refuge in His goodness and care. "In the earth:" which contradicts the heartless philosophy which teaches that God does not interest Himself or interfere in terrestrial affairs. (See *Critical Commentary.*)

"This then is the prophet's remedy for the healing of the nation. It is the true understanding and knowledge of God, of which the first, "*understanding,*" means *the spiritual enlightenment of the mind* (1 Cor. ii. 13, 14); the other, "*knowledge,*" *the training of the heart unto obedience* (John viii. 31, 32). This knowledge of God is further said to find in Him three chief attributes: (1.) "*loving-kindness,*" *i.e., readiness to show grace and mercy;* (2.) "*judgment,*" a *belief* in which is declared (Heb. xi. 6) to be *essential to faith;* (3.) "*righteousness,*" which is *essential to religion absolutely.* Unless men believe that God's dealings with them in life and death are right and just, they can neither love nor reverence Him."—*Speaker's Com.*

"*In these things I delight, saith the Lord;*" *i.e.,* both in *doing them* myself, and in *seeing them done* by others (Mic. vi. 8, vii. 18).

Ver. 25, 26. *Theme:* TRUE AND FALSE CIRCUMCISION. "*I will punish all* [omit words in italics here]—*circumcised with the uncircumcised.*"

"The Jews gloried in their circumcision, ignoring the true circumcision of the *heart.* (See Rom. ii. 25–29; Gal. v. 6; Col. ii. 11, which are the best comments on the passage.) Therefore they are regarded as uncircumcised, and will be punished with the enemies of Israel and of God—Ammon and Moab. Jeremiah does not raise the question as to whether the Egyptians, &c., were also circumcised in the flesh, but *combines Judah with* Egypt, Edom, &c., *the bitterest enemies of God and His Church;* and tells them that they have made themselves to be as the *uncircumcised*

among the nations by their apostasy from God. Here is a solemn warning to all that a *mere formal observance of religious ceremonies*, without spiritual holiness and dutiful obedience, is rejected and loathed by God, as no better than the abominations of idolatry; and apostates are reckoned as on a level with heathen votaries of false deities."—*Wordsworth.*

"*Egypt* is put first to degrade Judah, who, though in privileges above the Gentiles, by unfaithfulness sank below them. Egypt, too, was the power in which the Jews were so prone to trust, and by whose instigation they, as well as the other peoples specified, revolted from Babylon."—*Critical Com.*

"It is a common thing with Moses and the prophets to call an *unrenewed heart* 'uncircumcision,' and to say that the people are 'uncircumcised in heart:' for circumcision, while an evidence of free salvation in Christ, *initiated the Jews into the worship and service of God*, and proved the necessity of a new life; it was a sign of repentance and faith. When, therefore, the Jews presented only the sign, they were justly derided by Moses and the prophets; for they seemed as though they sought to pacify God with a thing of nought, without regarding the end. The same is the case when we boast of *baptism*, and are destitute of repentance and faith; our boasting is absurd and ridiculous; for the interior power is renovation, when our old man is crucified in us, and we rise again with Christ into newness of life."—*Calvin.*

"A clear testimony that the holy sacraments procure nothing for the work's sake. For the Jews were indeed circumcised in the flesh, but this was to be a sign to them of righteousness, that they should be spiritually circumcised in faith and good works. But since such spiritual circumcision did not follow, and they remained uncircumcised at heart, the other fleshly circumcision helped them not, but redounded instead to their sin."—*Cramer.*

Circumcision as a figure of the relation of man to God. i. *The three stages of circumcision*—uncircumcised, *outwardly* circumcised, *truly* circumcised, correspond to the three stages of our being *without* God, serving God *outwardly*, serving God *in spirit* and in truth. ii. As *external circumcision*, without that of the heart, *is equivalent* to *uncircumcision*, so the outward service of God without the inward is *equivalent to no service at all.*—*Naeg.*

Theme: SUPERFICIAL PIETY A DELUSION.

I. External religious observances are not necessarily accompanied by internal spiritual elevation. They do not *prove* nor *produce* inward purity and piety.

II. Without inward spiritual elevation our external advantages aggravate our impiety. They ought to *promote* piety; they offer a *pretence* of piety; they continually *pronounce against* our impiety.

III. Aggravating our impiety, our abuse of external advantages will ensure heavier condemnation. "Punished with the uncircumcised;" *classed with* the godless; *guiltier than* the godless; *condemned to the keener woe* which such must feel, even though the punishment itself be the same as that borne by the godless (Luke xiii. 26–28).

NOTICEABLE TOPICS AND TEXTS IN CHAPTER IX.

Topic: LAMENT FOR THE SLAIN DAUGHTERS OF SOCIETY. *Text:* "*Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people*" (ver. 1).

It is a fastidious morality which leads the virtuous to banish the wretched creatures of vice from thought, pity, effort. Wretchedness in any form should evoke commiseration. Physical suffering summons our ameliorating arts; surely moral degradation should not be passed by with stolidity or scorn! Guilty ones oft shed tears for themselves "for the misery which has come upon them," and have shown

themselves grateful for the tears of the virtuous who have "wept with them that weep." There is a winning force in tears, a saving force. A word of scorn, a look of wrath, cast at a fallen being, drives the guilty one, maddened to shame, agony, and indignation, into deeper crime.

I. A sight for tears. "Weep *for the slain*," &c. Over the moral and spiritual prostitution of his people, the prophet bewailed. The fair comeliness, the sweet, virginity, the chaste piety of the "daughter of Zion" was destroyed.

1. *It displayed the ravages of cruelty.* "The *slain*." A strong figure: God's fair daughters murdered!

(*a.*) Cruelty *perpetrated:* the "slain" speaks of *slayers:* and no language is too strong with which to denounce those who devastate virtue, assassinate happiness, ravage purity, and destroy character. The blood of victims cries out against them to heaven. (*b.*) Cruelty *suffered:* the "slain"—the word implies agonies. He mourns not the *dead*, who died in peace, but the murdered who perished by violence. Read the miserable case of the daughters of iniquity in the records of desperate deeds, who, "mad from life's history, glad to death's mystery," rush "out of the world."

2. *It shocked the feelings of patriotism.* "Weep for the slain of the daughters of *my people*." He lacks true nobleness who lacks patriotism; and patriotism will urge him in whom it lives to alleviate all wretchedness under which his *own people* groan. We need more to feel that a brother's or sister's misery is *our own misery*. Thus Jesus "bore our griefs," &c.

II. A cry of lament. "Oh, that my head were waters," &c. A bitter wail bursting from an aching heart. *Insensibility* to the piteous condition of the fallen declares against our own moral consciousness. Think of: 1. *Homes* which mourn for *daughters worse than dead*, a silent shame breaking every tender heart! Think of: 2. *Hopes* which are destroyed; children, which promised to be the light of age, "slain." And *Christian* hopes destroyed also,—*souls* slain, "twice dead,"—dead to happiness on earth, dead to happiness beyond.

Yet the cry of lament need *not* be a *cry of despair*. "Can these slain live?" Yes: for them Jesus atoned on Calvary, for them there is a quickening Spirit, for them room in heaven. Jesus spoke to a "woman who was a sinner;" saved her, loved her, severely rebuked those who repelled her; said tenderly to her, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven; faith hath saved thee, go in peace." (*a.*) *Banish not the degraded from purposes of mercy.* From Mary the Magdalene Jesus "cast out seven devils." (*b.*) *Banish them not from hope.* "Jesus saves to the uttermost;" and tells the self-righteous that "publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of heaven before them."

III. An appeal to pity. Oh, for tears, "that I might weep day and night."

1. *Our pity need not be dried* up by the consideration that the guilty and fallen *merit censure.* "Let him that is without sin first cast a stone." "If *Christ so loved us*—while we were yet sinners—we ought also to *love one another*." Being ourselves "forgiven ten thousand talents,"—our delinquencies against *Heaven*, let us not seize on a fellow-creature cruelly because *society* has been wronged to the extent of "five hundred pence." None can wrong society as humanity has wronged God. "Be merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful."

"Touch her not scornfully, Think of her mournfully, Tenderly, humanely."

Let tears flow for "the slain," as Jesus "wept over" Jerusalem, though it merited curses, and soon would clamour for His blood. "Begin at Jerusalem"—take to the *worst* sinners, and take *first* to them, the blessed message of love.

2. *Nor should our pity be transient.* "Day and night" let us "weep for the slain." Our pity will soon be *too late* for many. Redeem the time, that "the blessing of those ready to perish" may be won. "On some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.

hating even the garments spotted by the flesh." *The "Fountain opened for sin and all uncleanness" is open* still.

Topic: JEREMIAH: A LESSON FOR THE DISAPPOINTED. *Text:* "*O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place, that I might leave my people, for they be all treacherous men*" (ver. 2).

The prophets were ever ungratefully treated by the Israelites, themselves resisted, their warnings neglected, their good services forgotten. Yet the earlier prophets fared better than the later; for outward honour was paid them, as with Moses and Samuel; while those who came in after times suffered maltreatment, as Elijah, Micaiah, and Zechariah (Matt. xxiii. 35).

No prophet commenced labours with greater encouragements than Jeremiah. A king reigned who was bringing back the times of the man after God's own heart. This devout and zealous king was, moreover, *young*. What might not therefore be effected in the course of years? Bright fortunes seemed in store for the Church.

Schism, too, was at an end since Israel's captivity. Kings of the house of David again ruled over the whole land. Idolatry was destroyed by Josiah in all the cities. Thus, at first sight, it seemed reasonable to anticipate further and permanent improvements.

I. Every one begins with being sanguine.

Jeremiah did. God's servants entered on their office with more lively hopes than their after fortunes warranted. Very soon the cheerful prospect was overcast for Jeremiah, and he was left to labour in the dark.

Huldah's message fixed the coming fortunes of Judah: she foretold the *early death of the good king*, and *a fierce destruction to the unworthy nation*. This prophecy came five years after Jeremiah entered office; so early in his course were his hopes cut away.

Or the *express word of God* came to and undeceived him. Or the *hardened state of sin* in which the nation lay destroyed his hopes. But so it was that his mind sobered into the more blessed and noble temper, resignation.

II. Resignation a more blessed state of mind than sanguine hope—i.e., hope of present success. Because:

1. It is a truer state of mind. 2. More consistent with our fallen state of being. 3. More improving to our hearts. 4. The grace for which the most eminent servants of God have been conspicuous.

a. To expect great effects from our religious exertions is *natural* and *innocent*, but arises from *inexperience* of the kind of work we have to do—to change the heart and will of men.

b. Far nobler frame of mind to labour, not with hope of seeing fruit, but for *conscience' sake*, as *matter of duty*, and *in faith*, trusting good will be done though we see it not.

c. The Bible shows that though God's servants *began* with success, they *ended with disappointment*. Not that God's purposes or instruments fail, but because *the time for reaping is not here*, but hereafter. Thus: *Moses* began with leading forth Israel in triumph; ended before journey finished and Canaan gained. *Samuel's* ministry wrought reformations; ended in the people wilfully choosing a king. *Elijah*, after his successes, fled from Jezebel into the wilderness to mourn his disappointments. *Isaiah*, after Hezekiah's religious reign and miraculous defeat of Sennacherib's army, fell upon the evil days of Manasseh. *Apostles* show the same order of experience; for after all the great works God enabled them to do, see 2 Tim. iii. 13.

III. The vicissitude of feeling which this transition from hope to disappointment produces.

Jeremiah's trials during Josiah's reign were considerable, but afterwards ex

perienced persecution from every class of men: from the *people* (xviii. 18), *men of Anathoth* (xi. 21), *priests and prophets* (xxvi. 16 *sq.*), *chief governor* (xx. 2), *Zedekiah* (xxxii. 3), *conspirators* (xxxvii. 14). *Nebuchadnezzar* (xxxix. 14) and an *Ethiopian* were of the few persons who showed him any kindness. Such were his trials.

And *their effect upon his spirit?* Affliction, fear, despondency, sometimes restlessness, even impatience under his trials, find frequent expression in his writings (v. 3, 30, 31; xii. 1–3; xv. 10–18; xx. 7–14). Such is the succession and tide of feelings which most persons undergo before their minds settle into the calm of resignation.

IV. The issue of these changes and conflicts of feeling was resignation.

He comes to use language which expresses that chastened spirit and weaned heart which is the termination of all agitation and anxiety in religious minds.

He who at one time could not comfort himself, was sent to comfort a brother; and in comforting Baruch he speaks in that nobler temper of *resignation* which takes the place of *sanguine hope* and *harassing fear*, and betokens *calm and clear-sighted faith* and *inward peace* (chap. xlv.):—Seek not success; be not impatient; fret not thyself; be content if, after all thy labours, thou dost but save thyself, without seeing other fruit of them.

V. These truths apply not to the prophets only, but to all.

All live in a world which promises well but does not fulfil. All begin with hope, and (apart from religious prospects) end with disappointment. Much difference in our respective trials, arising from difference of tempers and fortune.

1. *Still it is in our nature to hope:* to begin life thoughtlessly and joyously; to seek great things in one way or other; to have vague notions of good to come; to love the world, believe its promises, and expect satisfaction and happiness from it.

2. *And it is our lot*, as life proceeds, *to encounter disappointment.* Exceptions may seem to show themselves in the retired ranks of society and settled wealth. Still all begin life with health and *end it amid sickness. Youth* leaves even those most favoured with fortunes, and *they lament the days gone*, remember them with pleasure mingled with pain. For they have *lost something they once had;* whereas at the outset they anticipated something they had not.

VI. It is not religion which suggests this sad view of things, but experience.

It is the world's doing. Though the Bible said nothing about the perishing nature of all earthly pleasures, it is a fact from which we cannot escape.

1. *Here it is that God Himself offers us His aid:* by His Word and His Church. Left to ourselves we seek good from the world and cannot find it: in youth look forward, and in age look back. Well that we be persuaded of these things betimes, to gain wisdom and provide for evil days.

2. *Seek we great things?* We must seek them *where* and *in the way* they are to be found, as He who came into the world to enable us to gain them has set them before us. We must be willing to give up present hope for future enjoyment.

3. *We must be changed* before we can receive our greatest good. Our nature is not in a state to enjoy happiness, even if offered to us. We seek it, feel we need it, but are not fitted for it. If we would gain true bliss, cease to seek it as an end, postpone the prospect of enjoying it.

4. *Learn to know ourselves, and have thoughts becoming ourselves.* Impetuous hope and undisciplined mirth ill become a sinner. Our guilt brought down the Son of God from heaven to die upon the cross for us. Should we live in pleasure here when the Gospel tells us of the Saviour's life-long affliction and disappointment?

5. *Prepare for suffering and disappointment*, which befit us as sinners and are necessary for us as saints. Accept affliction as a means of improving our hearts.

Look disappointment in the face; "taking the prophets as examples of suffering and patience."

Give not over your attempts to serve God, though you see nothing come of them. Watch and pray, and obey your conscience, though you cannot perceive your progress in holiness. Do the duties of your calling, though they are distasteful. Persevere in the narrow way.

Mourn that you may rejoice (Matt. v. 4). Take up the cross of Christ that you may wear the crown. Give your hearts to Him, and you will solve the difficulty how Christians can be "sorrowful yet alway rejoicing."

6. But you must *begin in faith.* "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." You cannot at first see where Christ is leading you, or how light will arise out of darkness. Must begin with pain, self-denial, refusing sin, mastering evil impulses, enduring irreligious sneers for Christ's sake, forcing your minds to prayer, keeping thought of God before you daily. The Holy Spirit will enable you to do this; then "shall your light rise in obscurity," &c. (Isa. lviii. 10, 11).—*Abridged and arranged from "Plain Sermons," by contributors to the "Tracts for the Times."*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER IX.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. "*Fountain of tears.*"

"Like a pent-up flood, swoln to the height,
He poured his griefs into my breast with tears,
Such as the manliest men in their crossed lives
Are sometimes forced to shed."
—JOANNA BAILLIE.

"Every one can master a grief but he that has it."—SHAKESPEARE.

Ver. 2. *Solitude:* "*A lodging-place,* that I might leave my people." "There is no flight for him into quiet religious contemplation; he cannot withdraw from the circle of interests in which his countrymen are dwelling. He may pass hours or months in solitude, but he will not be away from the events which are befalling them; he will be more deeply occupied with them; he will be contemplating them with a closeness and intensity to which the mere actors in them are strangers. The poor young priest of Anathoth can in no way sever himself from the policy of nations and rulers: Judea, Egypt, Chaldea, every tribe and power of the earth must be about him in his closet, must enter into his most inward personal experiences and sufferings."—*Maurice, "Prophets and Kings."*

"It is this childlike tenderness (Jer. i. 6) which adds force to the severity of his denunciations, to the bitterness of his grief. He was not one of those stern characters which bear without repining the necessary evils of life. He who was to be hard as brass and strong as iron, who had to look with unmoved countenance on the downward descent of his country, yet longed that his '*head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the daughter of his people.*' He whose task it was to run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, like the Grecian sage (v. 1, 2), to see if he could find a single honest man—to live, as it were, in the market-place as a butt of scorn, alike from the religious and the irreligious world—he was, by his own nature and inclination, the prophet of the desert, longing for a '*lodge*' in some vast wilderness, that he '*might leave his people,*' and avoid the sight of their crimes."—*Stanley, "Jewish Church,"* ii. 442.

"Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more! My ear is pained,
My soul is sick, with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled."—COWPER, "*Slavery.*"

"Far hid from the pitiless plunderer's view,
In the pathless depths of the parched Karroo;
And here, while the night-winds around me sigh,
And the stars burn bright in the midnight sky,
As I sit apart by the desert stone,
Like Elijah at Horeb's cave alone,
'A still small voice' comes through the wild—

Like a father consoling his fretful child—
Which banishes bitterness, wrath, and fear,
Saying—'MAN IS DISTANT, BUT GOD IS NEAR!'"—PRINGLE.

Ver. 4. *Slander.*

"Malicious slander never would have leisure
To search, with prying eyes, for faults abroad,
If all, like me, considered their own hearts,
And wept the sorrows which they find at home."—ROWE.

"Slander, the foulest whelp of sin! The man
In whom this spirit entered was undone;
His tongue was set on fire of hell; his heart
Was black as death; his legs were faint with haste
To propagate the lie his soul had framed;
His pillow was the peace of families
Destroyed, the sigh of innocence reproached,
Broken friendships, and the strife of brotherhoods."—POLLOK.

"Against slander there is no defence. Hell cannot boast so foul a fiend, nor men deplore so foul a foe. It stabs with a smile. It is a pestilence walking in darkness, spreading contagion far and wide, which the most wary traveller cannot avoid. It is the heart-searching dagger of the assassin. It is the poisoned arrow whose wound is incurable. It is as fatal as the sting of the most deadly asp; murder is its employment, innocence its prey, and ruin its sport."—*Gray's "Topics."*

Ver. 8. *Seductive speech:* like a poisoned arrow.

"The devil hath not, in all his quiver's choice,
An arrow for the heart like a sweet voice."
—BYRON.

Ver. 11. *Jerusalem in ruins.*

"Every stone is a witness of God's revelation, and every ruin a monument of his wrath."—*Pierotti.*

"Alas! we were warned, but we recked not the warning,
Till our warriors grew weak in the day of despair;
And our glory was fled as the light cloud of morning,
That gleams for a moment, and melts into air."—DALE.

"Her outcast tribes no longer come
To greet her as their hallowed home,
But sadly joy to lay their head
Beneath their foes' insulting tread;
To fall by her they could not save,
Their glory once, and now their grave."
—CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

Ver. 17. "*Mourning women.*" *African incident.*—"The mother of poor Touda, who heard that I wished to see him once more, led me to the house where the body was laid. The narrow space of the room was crowded; about *two hundred women were sitting and standing around, singing mourning songs* to doleful and monotonous airs. As I stood looking, the mother of Touda approached. She threw herself at the foot of her dead son, and begged him to speak to her once more. And then, when the corpse did not answer, she uttered a shriek, so long, so piercing, such a wail of love and grief, that tears came into my eyes. Poor African mother! she was literally as one sorrowing without hope; for with them there is no hope beyond the grave. 'All is done,' they say, with inexpressible sadness of conviction that sometimes gave me the heartache. As I left the hut, thinking these things, *the wailing recommenced.* It would be kept up by the women, who are the official mourners on these occasions, till the corpse was buried."—*Du Chaillu.*

Ver. 21. *Death.*

"What disarrays like death? It defaces the fascination of the beautiful. It breaks the lamp of the wise. It withers the strength of the mighty. It snatches the store of the rich. Kings are stripped of trapping, trophy, treasure: 'their glory shall not descend after them.'"—*Dr. R. W. Hamilton.*

"The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings.
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

"Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill;
But their strong nerves at last must yield;
They tame but one another still.
Early or late,
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath,
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

"The garlands wither on your brow:
Then boast no more your mighty deeds!
Upon Death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds!
Your heads must come
To the cold tomb:

Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."
—SHIRLEY.

"Death comes on with equal footstep
To the hall and hut:
Think you Death will tarry knocking
Where the door is shut?
Jesus waiteth, waiteth, *waiteth;*
But thy door is fast:
Grieved, away the Saviour turneth!
Death breaks through at last."
—UNKNOWN.

"I congratulate you and myself that life is passing fast away. What a superlatively grand and consoling idea is that of death! Without this radiant idea, this delightful morning star, indicating that the luminary of eternity is going to rise, life would, to my view, darken into midnight melancholy. Oh, the expectation of living *here* and living *thus* always would be indeed a prospect of overwhelming despair. But thanks be to that fatal decree that dooms us to die! thanks to that Gospel which opens the vision of an endless life! and thanks, above all, to that Saviour Friend who has promised to conduct all the faithful through the sacred trance of death into scenes of Paradise and everlasting delight."—*John Foster.*

Ver. 23. *Spurious glorying. Wisdom:* a bane or a blessing, according as it is used. Water well directed will turn the mighty mill, and thus spare wearisome toils; but if it break through its banks, it is a desolating and destructive thing. Sails are an advantage to a ship which steers aright; but if wrongly directed, the more sail she carries the worse for her, since they hasten her to the ominous rocks.

"Knowledge and Wisdom, far from being one,
Have ofttimes no connection. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
Wisdom, in minds attentive to their own."
—COWPER.

Might: "What illustration have we of such glorying in the history of Napoleon! At the head of his congregated legions he made the world stand in awe of him; but the scene changes, till we see him gnawing his heart away on a barren rock under the equator."—*Pilkington.*

"Our mightiest endeavours show us that, after all, we are only beating ourselves against the bars of a great cage. Can your feet stand upon the flowing river? Can you lay your finger upon the lowest of all the stars that shine in heaven. We are hemmed in by the impassable."—*Parker.*

Riches: Crœsus, whose name is a synonym for great wealth, was himself taken captive, stripped of all his treasures, and in old age was supported by the charity of Cyrus.

"If thou art rich, thou art poor;
For, like an ass whose back with ingots bows,
Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,
And Death unloads thee."—SHAKESPEARE.

"To purchase heaven has gold the power?
Can gold remove the mortal hour?
In life, can love be bought with gold?
Are friendship's pleasures to be sold?
Cease then on trash thy hopes to bind,
Let nobler views engage thy mind."
—JOHNSON.

"I have read of a man who had a suit, and when his case was to be heard, he applied himself to three friends to see what they would do. One answered he would bring him *as far on his journey as he could;* the second promised to go with him *to his journey's end;* the third engaged to *go with him before the judge* and speak for him, nor leave him till his cause was determined. These three are a man's *riches* his *friends* and his *graces.* His *riches* may not very long stay with him; his *friends* can go with him to the grave, but must there leave him; but his *graces* will go with him before God, never forsake him, but accompany him to the grave and to glory."—*Brooks.*

CHAPTER X.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. **Chronology of the chapter.** Section 1–16 has been declared spurious (by De Wette, Movers, and Hitzig), its authenticity disputed, a late interpolation by either the pseudo-Isaiah (Movers) or by a Babylonian exile. Even Naegelsbach affirms, "Who was the author, and when and by whom" the section was written, "cannot be ascertained." Two difficulties lead to this severance of the section from the book: 1. The continuity of thought is abruptly broken by these verses; 2. The topics treated therein belong to the time of the exile. Graf, Keil, Henderson, and Speaker's Com. contend for the genuineness and authenticity of the section; and affirm that Jeremiah here views his people "proleptically as in captivity," that he addresses them in *exile*, and places himself *among them* merely for the sake of argument (Hend.); that the train of thought in these sixteen verses is but an enlargement of the truth in ix. 23, 24, and that the fragmentary disconnected form of this chapter is, probably, owing to the fact "that only portions of the concluding part of Jeremiah's temple sermon were embodied in Baruch's roll" (Speaker's Com.). Thus Dr. Payne Smith and Keil date this chapter as synchronous with chap. ix., a part of the same discourse. Henderson isolates the chapter, but suggests no date. Dr. Dahler supposes it to be a separate discourse, delivered in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, after the first capture by Nebuchadnezzar, when the chiefs among the Jews were borne into Babylon—B.C. 605; Assyrian chronology, B.C. 586. This seems satisfactory: so we may venture with Bagster to separate this chapter from the foregoing by an interval of three years. The section 17–25 is by some referred to the eleventh year of Jehoiakim, the year of the king's death at the hand of the Chaldean monarch, Nebuchadnezzar.

2. **National History**; see chap. vii. *in loc.* Judah's experience of captivity began in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when Nebuchadnezzar, acting as Nabopolassar's lieutenant, besieged Jerusalem, and carried away, together with the spoils of the Temple, the youths of highest rank in the land, "the principal persons in dignity, 3000 in number" (Josephus), among whom were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—cousins of Jehoiakim. A mournful event; for in their loss the nation was deprived of well-nigh all the persons of piety and virtue whose influence in court tended to restrain the reckless, godless king, and to befriend Jeremiah in his sacred ministry of witness for righteousness and Jehovah. The solitary flower was plucked; the hope of Judah was now gone.

3. **Contemporary History.** Egypt retained international supremacy, and Judah was a vassal kingdom under Necho, until the fourth year of Jehoiakim. In that year Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho at Charchemish, and Judea, wrested from the Egyptian empire, became subject to the now Babylonian domination.

4 **Geographical References.** Ver. 9. "*Tarshish*," probably *Tartessus*, in south of Spain, emporium of the Phœnicians, and mart for trade (*cf.* Ezek. xxvii. 12). Heeren says that Spain "was once the richest country in the world for silver," and that "the silver mountains were in those parts which the Phœnicians comprised under the name of Tarsessus or Tarshish." "*Uphaz*," thought to mean *Ophir*. Henderson suggests that a copyist may have changed the original word אוֹפִיר, Ophir, into אוּפָז, Uphaz But Dr. Payne Smith contends that "the word is not to be regarded as an error for Ophir upon the authority of the Syriac; probably Uphaz was a place in the neighbourhood of the river Hyphasis, the Sanscrit name for which is Vipâçâ"

5. **Natural History.** Ver. 2. "*The signs of heaven*," Chaldean astrology, which professedly gathered from the position of stars and celestial signs predictions as to the career and destinies of nations and individuals. Ver. 5. "*Palm-tree*," formerly abundant in Judea (re-Jericho, Deut. xxxiv. 3); grew to great height, often 60 to 100 feet; always "upright;" winds had no power over its erect growth; threw out from its crown feathery leaves, each from 4 to 8 feet long, and from 40 to 80 in number; it lives about 200 years; yields dates. Ver. 9. "*Blue and purple*." Both colours were purple, but the "blue" had a dark violet tinge, the "purple" a light reddish hue; both were obtained from a secretion of shell-fish found on the shores of the Mediterranean. Ver. 22. "*Den of dragons*." See on ix. 11.

6 **Manners and Customs.** Ver. 2. "*Dismayed at signs of heaven. . . . heathen are dismayed at them*" Astrologers read the startling celestial phenomena, eclipses, comets, meteors, unusual conjunctions of the stars, as precursors of nearing calamities, and used them for working upon the superstitious fears of the people. Ver. 9. "*Silver spread into plates*." Silver is so malleable that it may be beaten out into 100,000th part of an inch thick; gold into 200,000th part of an inch. Images for idolatrous worship were overlaid with the precious metal (Hab. ii. 19). These "plates" brought from Tarshish were "like those on which the sacred books of the Singhalese are written to this day" (Dr. W. Smith). "*Blue and purple is their clothing*." Robes of these colours were worn by kings (Judges viii. 26; Matt. xxvii. 28), by the highest civil and religious officers, and by the wealthy and luxurious (Luke xvi. 19). Ver. 20. "*Tabernacle is spoiled, cords broken*." Tents were still largely in use, emphatically so in the pastoral districts, where the nomadic life was retained.

7. Literary Criticisms. Ver. 2. "*Dismayed* at signs of heaven." The verb expresses apprehension, dread; not homage. Ver. 6. "There is *none* like unto Thee," *i.e.*, *no one*, a double negative, intensifying the denial; מֵאַיִן, *no nothing*; the strongest form of negation. Ver. 7. "To Thee doth it *appertain*; יְאָתָה, from יָאָה, to be beautiful, decorous, suitable. "Unto Thee is it (fear) *due*" (Naeg.). Ver. 8. "*The stock is a doctrine of vanities*," *i.e.*, their *doctrine*, that in which they are taught to trust, is *wood*. *Keil:* "The teaching of the vanities is wood." *Speaker's Com.:* "The instruction of idols is a piece of wood." *Lange:* "Vain instruction! It is wood!" *Noyes:* "Most vain is their confidence; it is wood." *Blayney:* "The very wood itself being a rebuker of vanities." *Henderson:* "The tree itself is a reproof of vanities." *Ewald:* "The wood is mere vain teaching." Ver. 10. "*The true God.*" אֱמֶת, *truth*, in contrast with הֶבֶל, *vanity* (ver. 3). "Jehovah, *God in truth*." Ver. 11. "*Thus shall ye say*," &c. This verse is in Chaldee, on which account some critics reject it as a gloss (Venema, Ewald, Henderson); but Seb. Schmidt suggests that Jeremiah gave to the Jews this retort to the Chaldeans, for use when exiled and taunted in Chaldea—"*Ut Judaeis suggerat, quomodo Chaldaeis* (*ad quos non nisi Chaldaice loqui poterant*) *paucis verbis respondendum sit.*" Dr. Payne Smith thinks the verse "a proverbial saying, which Jeremiah inserts in its popular form." Ver. 14. "*Every man is brutish in his knowledge*," *i.e.*, *without* knowledge every man is brutish (Keil, Henderson, Lange); or, as others render the words, every man is *rendered brutish by his skill*, *i.e.*, in idol-making (Jamieson, Fausset, &c.). Ver. 15. "The work *of errors*," *i.e.*, of mockeries; the idols themselves deserving only derision and contempt, or inflicting on their worshippers only delusion and ridicule. Ver. 17. "Thy *wares*," *i.e.*, thy bundle, packages; not goods for trading, but articles for use. "*Inhabitant of the fortress*," inhabitress of the siege. Ver. 18. "*That they may find* it so." Find what? The Syriac supplies the word, "Me"—"*that they may find Me.*" But the Targum renders the word *find*, "feel"—"*I will distress them* with the rigours of a siege *that they may feel it.*" (So Hitz, Umbr., Naeg., Hend.).

HOMILETIC TREATMENT OF SECTIONS OF CHAPTER X.

Section 1–16. Jehovah, the true and eternal God, contrasted with idols.
,, 17–25. Judah's mournful distress; prayer for Jehovah's mitigating mercy.

Section 1–17.—Jehovah, the True and Eternal God, Contrasted with Idols.

This appeal, addressed to "house of Israel," the whole covenant race. It may, however, be (as in chap. iii. 12) a distinct address to the then scattered Israelites, *in exile already* among "the heathen;" or an inclusive appeal to the entire nation; Judah soon *to go into exile*, and Israel already there.

I. Superstitions and idolatries censured and contemned. "Learn not the way of the heathen" (ver. 2); "for the customs of the people are vain" (ver. 3).

1. *The casuistries of astrology censured* (ver. 2). The creation of "the heavens" is Jehovah's handiwork (ver. 12), and His "signs" there must not be regarded superstitiously, nor be associated with false deities, as is "the way of the heathen;" but be regarded with intelligent admiration, with adoring homage of Him whose glory and goodness they reveal. (Addenda on ver. 2, "*Signs of heaven.*")

2. *The vanities of idolatry contemned.* Observe (1.) *how these idols originate* (ver. 3, 4); (2.) *how senseless and helpless they are when made* (ver. 4, 5); (3.) *how little power they possess over men*, either for "evil" or "good" (ver. 5); (4.) *how ridiculous* (ver. 8) *they are, notwithstanding their gorgeous decoration* (ver. 9); (5.) *how certainly they who make and trust in them will be put to derision* (ver. 14); (6.) *how prophecy foredooms them all* (ver. 11, 15).

II. Sublime representations of Jehovah's glory and Israel's resources in Him. "Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations!" (ver. 7).

1. *The majesty of Jehovah's attributes.* (1.) *His incomparable greatness* appeals to universal reverence (ver. 6, 7). (2.) *His eternal glory and sway* admonish those who provoke Him (ver. 10). (3.) *All creation asserts His grandeur and illustrates His power* (ver. 12, 13). Thus He is God of "*the nations*" (ver. 7), and men of every nationality and in every land should own and revere Him. Moreover, false deities shall "perish" (ver. 11), but Jehovah *ever liveth*, "the true and

living God, the everlasting King" (ver. 10); hence there is no hope of evading Him. Yea, and *the wide universe testifies of Him* (ver. 12, 13), therefore He everywhere commands man's recognition, even as everywhere He extends to man His providential care. (Addenda on ver. 6, 10.)

2. *The grandeur of Israel's heritage in God.* To His chosen people the double blessing avails: (1.) *God is their portion* (ver. 16); "the portion of Jacob" is "the Former of all things." What wealth, therefore, they have in Jehovah! "*My God* shall supply all need according to His riches in glory." (2.) *Israel is God's inheritance*, chosen by Him as His peculiar treasure; therefore, "all things were theirs"—covenants, promises, adoption! What could they want with other and vain gods, having Him who was the Creator and Governor of the universe as their own God, who claimed and loved them as "the rod of His inheritance?" Had they been satisfied with God, He would have satisfied their souls with His infinite fulness.

Section 17–25. Judah's Mournful Distress: Prayer for Jehovah's Mitigating Mercy.

It would soon be Judah's melancholy fate to go after Israel into captivity and degradation. "Gather up *thy* wares out of the land" (ver. 17). This had become a stern necessity in consequence of Judah's spiritual revolt, and God Himself would secure its accomplishment: "Behold I will sling out the inhabitants," &c. (ver. 18).

I. **The anguish of exiled Judah.** "Woe is me for my hurt," &c. (ver. 19). Language either of pathetic bemoaning or of sullen repining. Suggests 1. *Terrified realisation of punishment:* "Woe is me!" She had "looked for peace," thought to sin on with impunity, dreamed not that "sudden destruction" would come, imagined herself secure in her ungodliness; but "behold bitterness!" Note the aspect of her suffering: "*hurt*" something real, injurious, painful; not a mere terror, but a keen pang. Such are God's chastisements and punishments. 2. *Poignant experience of distress:* "wound grievous." And a grievous wound is both a pain and a peril, dreadful to bear and threatening fatal issues. 3. *Sullen submission to calamity:* "But I said," when about to lament my lot, what good will come of making ado? "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it!" Stoical hardness: "I cannot remedy it, so I must bear it. Fretting will not alleviate it, so I will keep silence!" How different this from *penitence for the cause* of the misery, and *patient submission to consequences*, which find solemn expression in, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good!" 4. *Hopeless reconciliation to misery:* "I must bear it!" Not, "Come and let us return to the Lord, for He hath smitten and He will heal us!" She will not seek Divine healing for her "wounds" (chap. viii. 21, 22), therefore she sees no hope in her anguish; for being "without God," she is "without hope in the world."

II. **The devastations of the Holy Land.** The figure, "tabernacle" (ver. 20), suggests the idea of (1.) *weakness and insecurity;* for though the Jews prided themselves in Jerusalem as a strong and fortified city, it would prove as defenceless as a tent. The "tabernacle spoiled and cords broken" suggest (2.) the *total dissolution and destruction of the Jewish state:* the government had broken up, the nationality had collapsed. Thus the lament declares, 1. *The overthrow of the theocracy:* "Tabernacle spoiled." 2. *The banishment of the people:* "Children gone forth," &c., either exiled or slain: "they are not." 3. *The rulers are defeated:* "pastors become brutish; not prosper; flocks scattered (ver. 21); they were impotent to repair the ruined state: the *explanation* being, "they have not sought the Lord;" they ignored the fact that *His* hand was in this overthrow, and hence they ignored the fact that *to Him* must they look for deliverance and redress. 4. *The enemy was triumphant:* "To make the cities desolate, a den of dragons" (ver. 22): the Chaldean avarice would spare nothing. What direful ravages follow in the train of sin!

III. The prayer for Jehovah's intervention. Though the suffering nation repudiated God, there was *one intercessor*—Jeremiah—who cried to Jehovah for mercy. Yes; and though the world ignores God now, still there is "One Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus;" whose pleading voice goes up even for the fruitless thing—"Let be this year also!" Preaching had done little good, so the prophet turns to prayer. Words addressed to God may be powerful when words addressed to men are powerless. *He* will hear though *they* forbear. 1. *Acknowledgment of God's supreme providence.* Man's designs are subordinate to God's purposes (ver. 23). We cannot have everything according to our own mind, and here Jeremiah surrendered his desires to God's will; he will not ask God to do other than He deems best, sad though he is for his nation's nearing ruin. Yet also the prophet seems to imply that the army of Nebuchadnezzar will not be allowed by God to do other than as He wills: enemies are not unrestrained; God worketh according to His will among armies and over men. 2. *Appeal to Divine pitifulness.* The prophet identifies himself with his nation, and entreats that the necessary punishment may be mercifully tempered and restrained. We deserve "correction," need chastisement, but could not survive "anger." 3. *Imprecation of God's wrath upon Judah's oppressors;* for the Chaldeans, though used by God, were malevolent, implacable, and impious, and merited punishment even while carrying out God's designs. God may permit oppression of His people, may even use it to chasten them; but oppressors, who deny God and work malicious projects, shall in their turn feel the crushing rebukes of a mightier Power (Ps. lxxv. 8).

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON SUCCESSIVE VERSES OF CHAPTER X.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* INFLEXIBLE GODLINESS. *"Learn not the way of the heathen."*

Cast among "the heathen" by exile, Israel was not to accommodate herself to the religious or irreligious aspects which there environed her.

"The way" means either their *mode of life* or their *customs in worship.* The phrase is used in the New Testament as descriptive of the Christian discipleship. Ἡ ὁδός—comp. Acts ix. 2, xix. 9.

Suggested that—

I. Concession to the order of things surrounding us is a specious temptation. Among "the heathen" do as they do. 1. *Convenient:* for saves us from the annoyances which self-assertion and individuality provoke. 2. *Advantageous:* for it appeases and gratifies others, and lays some worldly gains within our reach. 3. *Pleasant:* there is a novelty and a relaxation and an enjoyment in this self-adaptation; good for us to bend a little.

II. Conformity to the dominant religion is not to be our ruling habit. It may be needful to stand apart from **"the way" which the state** supports and wealth fosters. Do "not learn" it even have nought to do with it. There are *different* forms of religion abroad; and more, there are *antagonistic* forms of religion. Are we to conform to any "way" which favour and fortune patronises simply because in that locality or country we find it dominant? 1. Religion asks *unswerving allegiance* of the soul. If we are unstable, God's covenant and promises will not stand good for us. 2. God asks us to *witness for Him against false religions* in irreligious scenes and in irreligious times. The dominant religion may be *plausible*, it may be *imperious;* but whether baited with seductions, or armed with persecutions, if it be *not right*, refuse compliance. "Learn not the way."

III. Fidelity to conscience and to God must be uncompromising. In all scenes, under all circumstances, at all times. A pliant godliness is: 1. *Cowardly:* contrast with it Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 2. *Contemptible:* the "man of God" sinks down into a mere time-serving hypocrite. 3. *Condemned:* for it not only degrades the man himself, and dishonours God, for **hom he should be valiant and bold**

but it *denies to Jehovah His due;* for He has *rights* in His people; they are "not their own, but bought with a price, and hence should glorify Him in body and spirit, which are His;" and His people owe *obligations* to Him in return for the revelation and the grace He has bestowed on them. Hide not "light under bushel;" "Even in Sardis defile not your garments;" "Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Comp. 2 Cor. vi. 14–18.)

Illustrations of unyielding constancy: *Moses* refused to be called son of Pharaoh's daughter, and joined himself valiantly with the despised Hebrews. *Daniel*, who prayed, despite the royal edict. *Our Lord Himself*, who repudiated the religious habits and ideas which prevailed. *Paul*, who "approved himself to God in much patience, in affliction, in distress, in stripes," &c. (2 Cor. vi. 4, *sq.*). Indeed, godliness has produced martyrs in every age whose sole crime, civil or ecclesiastical, was, that they would "not learn the way" which those in power would have enforced. (Comp. Heb. xi. 32. *sq.*) "Quit you like men, be strong!"

Ver. 2. *Theme:* SUPERSTITIOUS TERROR AT THE MARVELS OF NATURE: "Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven."

Eichorn supposes a reference to some astronomical portent which was then causing "dismay." *Hitzig* thinks these "signs" were some alarming celestial appearances intended as heralds of impending judgment. *Naegelsbach*, however, believes the reference to the permanent constellations and usual signs of the firmament; nothing extraordinary or portentous. But *Kiel* and *Dr. P. Smith* well argue that the word "dismay" suggests, not adoration such as the heathen might yield to ordinary celestial appearances, but alarm and consternation, consequent upon some unwonted phenomena.

Before such "signs," wonder but not worship; admire the heavens, but do not adore; ponder them intelligently, but do not prostrate yourself before them idolatrously.

I. **Ignorance and idolatry are alike in this: they fall into superstitious terror of natural things.**

The crude and uninformed mind is startled, bewildered, and appalled by celestial phenomena. Nor by these alone; terrestrial marvels equally awaken superstitious dismay. They drive the *ignorant* to terror, the *idolatrous* to worship. Eclipses or earthquakes, comets or tempests, unusual constellations or calamities, fill with consternation. This indicates that:

1. *The wonders of nature are very majestic and solemn.* Sufficient to impress men everywhere with the *supernatural*; speaking to them of vast and hidden realities.

2. *The benighted mind of man is fruitful of fears.* Sees terrors and portents everywhere. And "fear hath torment." How much better the "perfect love which casteth out fear," which assured reliance on God secures! Religion is the antidote of the miseries of superstition.

II. **Sacred enlightenment reveals God as above all nature's wonders.** "The *heathen* are dismayed;" but a people knowing God should not be dismayed. They adored celestial appearances, bowed in terror before nature's marvels, because they knew not the *Great First Cause.* Astrologers taught that events depended on the stars which were possessed with power; and Plato thought them endued with spirit and reason. (Addenda on ver. 2, "*Signs of heaven.*")

1. *The benefit of natural knowledge*, of physics, science, &c., which reveal to us that nature is not a fitful, capricious omnipotence, but is obedient to law, regulated in all occurrences; that a Supernatural Ruler controls and directs all events.

2. *The blessings of sacred revelation*, which opens the hidden world to us, makes clear to us this fact that a Father governs the universe, who loves man, who asks man's loving trust, not slavish terror.

3. *The joyfulness of spiritual enlightenment*, which goes beyond a sacred knowledge, and dwells in personal enjoy-

ment of God; not only as the Lord of the universe, who "works all things together for good," but as the Father of Jesus, who claims and cherishes us as His children, which enables us to say,

"This awful God is *ours!*"

which sees *His love in Christ*, and by that light interprets all that occurs.

III. Possession of God's favour enables man intelligently to enjoy His works. "The Lord speaketh unto *you, O house of Israel* (ver. 1), Be not dismayed," &c. And theirs were the covenants and promises, &c. They were a people "whose God is the Lord."

1. *God's works call forth amazement and admiration*, even where intelligence alone is possessed; yet this is not equal to the childlike gladness of the Christian which revels amid the wealth and loveliness of the "Father's house."

2. *In God's works the Christian finds sublime illustrations of God Himself.* Scientific men pause at the works; the Christian passes on to the Worker: "through nature up to nature's God." "When I consider the heavens, the work of *Thy* hands, the moon and stars, which *Thou* hast ordained," &c. They alone truly enjoy nature who "also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 11). What beautiful and inspiring aspects of God's attributes do the glories of nature supply to us! (Comp. Isa. xl. 25–31.)

Ver. 3–5. *Theme:* IDOL MANUFACTURE. (Addenda on ver. 3.)

I. *The original materials to which the idol owes its existence.* "A tree out of the forest" (ver. 3). Only like other trees, which still remain trees!

II. *The industrious toils to which the idol owes its formation.* "The work of the workman" (ver. 3). Not divine in its structure.

III. *The formative instrument to which the idol owes its dignity.* "The axe." No supernatural appliances or aids came to its help; merely a hatchet.

IV. *The process of adornment to which the idol owes its attractiveness.* "They deck it with silver," &c. (ver. 4).

V. *The ingenious arrangement by which the idol is invested with a decent posture* "They fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not" (ver. 4).

VI. *The clumsy workmanship which denies to the idol becoming stateliness.* A god ought to be of fair and graceful form, but it is "upright as a palm-tree" (ver. 5); stiff, inelegant pillars. Many commentators render the words thus: "They are like pillars in a cucumber garden;" *i.e.*, the shapeless blocks set up to scare away birds.

VII. *The generous attentions to which the idol owes its movements.* "They must needs be borne, for they cannot go." (Addenda on ver. 5.) So that all an idol *is* and *does*, it owes to man! It could not make itself, it cannot help itself.

Hence, 1. *How degrading this for a god!* 2. *How degrading this for a worshipper!* Surely (ver. 3) "the customs of the people are vain." What need to lead the people to "turn from dead idols to serve the living God!" For as the idols cannot help themselves, neither can they *help their worshippers*, unable to *speak* or *stir*, to render them any service. Without life or power.

VIII. *The natural treatment which the idol merits.* "Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil nor good." (Comp. Isa. xl. and xli., from which doubtless Jeremiah drew his illustrations, he being familiar with Isaiah's writings.)

Ver. 6. Comments:

There cannot be two highest Beings, or there would be none. In the idea of the Absolute there is involved that of uniqueness. Polytheism has therefore no highest Being in the absolute sense. Where, however, traces of such are found, polytheism is about either to rise to monotheism or to dissolve into pantheism.—*Lange.* (Addenda on ver. 10.)

"*None like unto Thee, O Lord;*" none of all the heroes which the heathen have deified, the dead men of whom they made dead images, and whom they worshipped. Some were deified and adored for their *wisdom*, but "among all the wise men of the nations" (ver. 7), the greatest philosophers or statesmen, as Apollo or Hermes, there is none like Thee. Others were deified and adored

for their *dominion*, but "in all their royalty" (so ver. 7 may read), among all their kings, as Saturn and Jupiter, there is none like unto Thee. What is the glory of a man who invented a useful art or founded a flourishing kingdom, what the glory of the greatest prince or potentate (and on such grounds did the heathen deify men), compared with the glory of the Creator of the world?—*Henry.*

Ver. 7. *Theme*: JEHOVAH'S UNCHALLENGEABLE CLAIM ON HUMAN REVERENCE.

To worship any other than Him is an infringement of His inalienable prerogative.

I. **The universal scope of God's dominion.** "King of nations;" not only "King of the *Jews*," nor only "King of *saints*," but all nations are within His domain. Hence, therefore, not Israel alone should yield Him fealty and homage, for the Lord of all should be worshipped and obeyed by all. He reigns over all mankind (Ps. xxii. 28); all mankind should render loyal reverence to Him. God's sway is over *each*, as well as all; over *me*, as well as over nations; and each must therefore for himself own Him King.

II. **The impressive manifestations of Divine power.** As "King of nations," God's "name is great" (ver. 6); it is a lofty and imposing title. Does Jehovah *sustain by deeds* this universal dominion? "Thy name is *great in might*" (ver. 6): the King rules royally as far as His name and domain extend. "Name great in might," means displaying itself in acts of might. Great in renown, God justifies His title by manifestations of majesty and power. His footsteps are on every scene, His hand doeth wondrous things in every man's experience and career: "Marvellous are Thy works, and that *my soul* knoweth right well." Therefore *I* should revere Him.

III. **The incomparable perfections of God Himself.** The possession of glory and power does not always coincide with personal worth and goodness. But with Jehovah, "among all the wise men, &c. (ver. 7), none like Thee." Omit "men;" for "*wise*" includes *gods* also, the authors of heathen oracles. "In all their *kingdoms*," properly, their *royalty* or kingship, none so royal as Jehovah. (1.) *Unapproachable wisdom.* (2.) *Incomparable royalty.* Contrast the "wisdom" of pagan gods, even their most clever oracles; and what are they when set over against the *benignant wisdom* of the Creator evident in all His works, and the *redeeming wisdom*, the wondrous graciousness of God's plan, shown in the Gospel, in "Christ the wisdom of God." Contrast the *royal dignity and nobleness* of idols with Him whose "glory the heavens declare," and whose highest manifestation of "glory is in the face of Jesus Christ." How blessed are we, having Him as "our Lord and our God!"

IV. **The solemn appropriateness of human homage.** "To Thee doth it appertain." (See Crit. Notes, *supra.*) "Fear," *i.e.* trustful reverence, the lowly homage of love. Not (1.) *Terror*; that is for the vanquished, for slaves. (2.) Nor *worship* alone, rendering Him the adoration, devotedness, and love which the eminence of His perfections demands. But (3.) *Restful and happy trust*; a "fear" which finds in Him all occasions for our own happiness if we do His will and please Him, yet which recognises His power to consume the disobedient—realising that life and death are with Him. It is a *happy "fear"* with those who are "hid with Christ in God;" but a *deep dread* of His disfavour if by guilt we incur His frown. (See ver. 10.)

There is an appropriateness and a rightness in our loving reverence of God; it is the dutiful child resting in the Father's embrace, reverently contemplating His graciousness, and gratefully adoring him in return. (Addenda on ver. 6, "*None like Thee, O Lord*," and "*Thy Name is great.*")

Ver. 8, 9. Comments:

"*They are altogether brutish.* Brutishness here does not refer to a vicious state, but to the senseless stupidity of savages, who know no better than to adore a "tree." "*Altogether* brutish;" rather *all alike*: the "wise" (ver. 7)

and the "heathen" (ver. 2) equally on a level with "brutes." Note that in Daniel and Revelations how often the power which opposes and ignores God is personified in a "beast." Man forfeits his dignity, and even his humanity, and sinks to the level of a "brute," when he severs himself from God (Ps. cxv. 8).

"*Their stock is a doctrine of vanity.*" (*Cf.* Lit. Crit., *supra.*) The idols are vanity; hence, also, their doctrine is vanity. From such senseless gods what could their worshippers learn? *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* Thus Keil remarks, "The heathen, with all their wise men, are brutish, since their gods, from which they should receive instruction, are wood."

"*Silver spread into plates,*" &c. (*Cf.* Geographical References, and Manners and Customs, *supra.*)

"However much the wood ("stock") be decked out with silver, gold, and purple raiment, it remains but the product of men's hands; by no such process does the wood become a god."—*Keil.*

Ver. 10. *Theme:* THE ONLY TRUE GOD. Observe with what unity of assertion the Scriptures, Old and New, affirm this of Jehovah: He is "the true God" (text); "That they might know Thee, the only true God" (John xvii. 3), &c. (Addenda on ver. 10, "*The true God.*")

I. *In contrast with the "vanity" of idols* (ver. 3, 8, 15) Jehovah is Truth. Not merely "true" in word and deed, *veracious* and *faithful*, but *truth* in essence, in Himself, as a quality of His being. And also a God who is no mere imaginary Being, but a sublime reality. God is a FACT. And being real, He is essentially *true.* And because in Himself true, He will *deceive and disappoint none* who trust in and seek Him. As He has revealed Himself, so He is; no insincerity in Him, no misrepresentation of Himself. That being so, how cheering to turn to the revelation He has made—to *Moses* as "merciful and gracious," &c., and in *Jesus* as the Friend and Father of man—and to know all this is really so: "The Lord is the true God."

II. *In contrast with lifeless idols* (ver. 5) Jehovah lives. He is "the living God." Not a mere impersonal all-pervading *Force;* not a self-evolving *Law;* but a BEING. And because He lives, He has *life in Himself*, underived, and is Himself the Fount of Life, dispensing vitality to humanity. "Who only hath immortality." "In whom we live," &c. "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given the Son to have life in Himself." "In Him was life." "Christ is our life."

III. *In contrast with the temporary duration of idols and idolatry* (ver. 11, 15) Jehovah is eternal. Idols are but of yesterday, and they shall perish; but the Lord is "everlasting," and therefore they who are His have an *imperishable Hope*, a *never-failing Refuge*, a *deathless Friend.* And the human *soul* wants more than the transient. "When heart and flesh faileth, God is the strength of my heart and my *portion for ever.*" Here is the *confidence of the righteous:* God will never fail them. Here, too, is the terror of the disobedient: they will never evade the "everlasting God." The like attribute is assigned to Jesus (Heb. i. 12), and He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

IV. *In contrast with the impotence of idols* (ver. 5, "Cannot go; cannot do evil nor good") God is King. A monarch so *mighty* that his wrath fills "*earth*" with trembling; so *terrible* that "*nations*" fail at His anger. Men do well to "*fear*" Him (ver. 7), and by reverent homage to abide in His favour. Alarming as is such a presentation of God's monarchical majesty, it is only the manifestation *suited to defiant sinners.* There is a gentler side of the character of God: view it revealed in "the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, and hath declared Him." "God is love." (Addenda on ver. 10, "*The true God.*")

Ver. 11–13. *Theme:* AN APPEAL TO GOD'S WORKS. A challenge seems suggested: judge of the idols *by their works.* What have they done? (ver. 11, "*Not made* heavens

and earth"). But estimate Jehovah by His creative power (ver. 12), and by His providential operations in nature (ver. 13). It was in effect the like challenge to that of Elijah, "He who answers by fire, let Him be God"—decide by the works. So Jesus asks, "Believe Me for the very work's sake." It was an old Greek saying, "Whoever thinks himself a god besides the One God, let him make another world." (See Ps. xcvi. 5.) Contemplate—

I. God as manifested in His original work of creation. Three distinct *acts* recorded (ver. 12)—"*made*," "*established*," "*stretched out;*" and three distinct *attributes* marked—"power," "wisdom," "discretion."

1. *God's formative power:* "Made the earth by His power." And consider the size, the materials, the wealth and beauty stored within the earth, and the loveliness and variety with which He has clothed it, setting man thereon "over the works of His hands." What a conception of God is supplied! What have *idols* "made"?

2. *God's ordering and controlling wisdom:* "Established the world by His wisdom." Separating the waters from the land, regulating the seasons, making the habitable parts suitable for the living creatures and serviceable for man, and, amid all natural changes, securing the world from convulsions which would destroy life from the surface of the world, or overthrow the healthful and happy order which prevails. What have the idols arranged for man's daily good, and enjoyment of unmolested safety in the world?

3. *God's benignant discretion:* "Stretched out the heavens by His discretion." The "heavens" are full of proof of intelligent design in themselves, and of gracious consideration for God's creatures (Gen. i. 18; Jer. xxxi. 35). But "the *gods* have *not* made the heavens," &c. (ver. 11).

II. God as manifesting Himself in His perpetual work of providence; controlling and caring for the world He made (ver. 13).

1. *All parts of the universe yield their stores at His command.* "The heavens" their waters; "the ends of the earth" their vapours; the chambers of "lightning" and the caves of the "wind" their "treasures." So that there is no recess of nature, celestial or terrestrial, whereinto His controlling will does not penetrate. Hence *God's providence pervades all scenes*, and He has the universe under His control. But idols are "fastened with nails" (ver. 4) to one spot, and have no power to move from it, nor wield a sceptre over any scene.

2. *All forces of nature implicitly obey His bidding.* The thunder utters His command: "uttereth His voice." The "waters in the heavens" hear, and accumulate in "a multitude." The clouds, "vapours," ascend in recognition of His sway, for He "causeth" them to rise in clouds from the ends of the earth, (the seas and rivers responding to His laws. "Lightnings" are His "making," and also "rain." And as for the "winds," they only escape from their recesses as "He bringeth them forth." *All forces of nature are within His sway*, and they serve His will. (See Ps. cxlvii. 8, 15–18). But what resources can idols command?

This is the argument of *Natural Religion*—God's pervading power and goodness, manifest in His works, and those works manifesting Him to man (Rom. i. 19, 20), making an appeal to man's reverence, gratitude, and love (Rom. i. 21, ii. 4).

But what are these utterances in the heavens, and these voiceless wonders of nature, and these startling accompaniments of storms as heralds and witnesses of God, compared with the tenderer and more solemn revelations of Him in Christ? Not in the earthquake, tempest, or fire did Elijah discern God, but in "the still small voice." And God's highest argument, His unchallengeable claim to human reverence and love, bases itself less on the wonders of His works in the world *around* man than on the wonders of His grace *within* the human soul. There He asserts His supreme worth to man; it is His undisputed empire, His rightful throne.

Ver. 14, 15. *Theme:* REFLEX INFLUENCE OF THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP UPON THE WORSHIPPER.

Text means: His skill in making idols, or his acquaintance with idols, debases and brutalises him, deadens the sensibilities of his nature, and degrades the dignity of his manhood. Thus:—

I. Acquaintance with false gods debases men. "Knowledge" in this region renders men "brutish." Such is the universal consequence of idolatry. Heathenism shows how damaging to the finest instincts and noblest virtues of humanity idol-worship becomes. (Addenda on ver. 14.)

This applies not alone to *material idols*, graven and fashioned by the heathen, but to those *heart idols* which the irreligious man, and even the worldly Christian man, makes to himself. The thing which he allows to usurp God's place in his soul, that is his idol, and it will give a tone to his character and career. Worship acts reflectively on the worshipper.

II. Confidence in false gods deludes men. The "founder is confounded by the graven image." Why? "His molten image is falsehood"—a deception, without spirit or "breath." *Idols are delusions;* they fulfil not our hopes; they embitter our hearts by their "falsehood." They are *themselves* "*vanity*" (ver. 15). Their *creation was a* "*work of errors*," a profound and hollow mockery, and covering with ridicule their votaries and worshippers.

God prophesies their doom. "In the time of their visitation they shall perish;" *i.e.*, when God visits the idol-worshippers, the idols shall be destroyed. It was so when God visited these idolatrous Jews in Babylon; He destroyed their idols by Cyrus. So have they perished everywhere when God has "visited" the deluded with better knowledge. And as the Gospel spreads, idols shall be cast down, and the enslaved soul find emancipation and illumination in Christ.

Ver. 16. *Theme:* GOD'S COVENANT HERITAGE IN ISRAEL.

Notwithstanding Israel's desertion of Jehovah for idols, observe how they are here spoken of as if *still united and inseparable.* God continues to be "the portion of Jacob," and "Israel the inheritance" of the Lord. This relationship is not to be easily or lightly severed or ignored. More; as Jehovah is "*not like*" *idols*, so *neither is Israel like idolaters;* for they have this glorious God as their portion—a crowning distinction that!

I. What a lavish estimate God forms of Israel's worth.

1. *He prized Israel as His peculiar possession;* calls them His "inheritance," something upon which He sets His heart, cherishes jealously, prizes greatly. (Comp. Eph. i. 17, 18, "What the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.") It amazes us that God should so value His people.

2. *He bestows Himself on Israel in exchange for this* "*inheritance;*" becomes in return "the portion of Jacob." This expresses how highly He esteems His people; He holds back nothing in order to secure their love and allegiance. See this bestowing Himself fully illustrated and enacted in Christ, "who *loved us*, and *gave Himself* for us."

II. What a glorious supremacy distinguishes Israel's God.

1. *By emphatic dissimilarity with false gods:* "Not like them." They are themselves "vanity" (ver. 15), and they delude their votaries (ver. 14).

2. *By the sublimity of His works:* "The Former of all things." Creation reflects Him; the boundless universe shows who God is.

3. *By the dignity of His name:* "The Lord of Hosts;" *i.e.*, the hosts of heaven, the nations of earth (ver. 7). He is *The Highest* therefore; and the highest is *God*, God *alone.*

Israel's *honour* and *happiness* in possessing the one true God as a "portion." With whom should this God be exchanged? "The Lord is the *true* God, *living* God, *everlasting* King" (ver. 10). What *dignity* the possession of such a Deity imparts to Israel; what *a firm basis for faith* is supplied in having such a God as He!

III. What an infinite inheritance Israel has in Jehovah.

1. Consider *the resources God has in Himself:* "He is the *Former* of *all things.*" The firmament shows His glory, the earth is full of His riches; all these things His hand made. What cannot He do? What is beyond Him? Is there anything He cannot *perform* or *produce*, or *procure* for Israel, if necessity demands it? Yet this outgoing of *Power* in *Creation* is less an assurance to us than the outgoing of *Love* in *Redemption;* and "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

2. Consider *the forces God has at His command:* "The *Lord of hosts* is His name." (See Ps. ciii. 19–21.) "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legion of angels" (Matt. xxvi. 53). No man can number the hosts of God. In part they were shown to Elisha's attendant (2 Kings vi. 17); Daniel saw something of the host (Dan. vii. 12); the Apocalypse revealed the "armies of heaven" more fully (Rev. v. 11). And "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14).

God is Israel's treasure, and all His wealth is theirs: we are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Ver. 17, 18. *Theme:* IMMINENT EXILE.

A new section: discourse addressed (not to Israel, as the foregoing, but) to inhabitants of Jerusalem. Be in readiness to start for captivity.

I. The situation of the people. She is an "inhabitress of the fortress" *besieged.* The time of this prophecy is probably at the end of Jehoiakim's reign. Nebuchadnezzar is at the gates of Jerusalem, the city assailed by Babylonian forces; but a brief interval and the foe will be occupant of the citadel.

II. The issue of the siege. The "fortress" will be vanquished. The people are urged to use the short opportunity remaining for "gathering up their packages" ready, thereby making what preparation they can for their migration as captives into "the north." All resistance is now impotent.

III. The sentence of Jehovah. "I will sling out the inhabitants." *God's hand* was in their defeat and misfortunes. It would be effected with *violence:* "sling out," properly "hurl out." It would be *thorough:* "at this time"—hitherto hostile invasions had ended with plundering and imposition of tribute. It would be *painful:* "distress them." It would have a *definite purpose:* "that they may find," *i.e., feel,* either *their sin,* or "feel" *after Me.* (See Lit. Crit. on verse.)

Ver. 19. (See "*Noticeable Topics.*")

Theme: GREAT AFFLICTION AND SORROW OF HEART.

We may learn what it is to bow under the mighty hand of God. It is

i. That a man recognise the suffering as *his* suffering; *i.e.*, (*a.*) as that which he has himself prepared; (*b.*) as that which is right for him, not too heavy and not too light, but exactly corresponding to its beneficent purpose.

ii. That a man accept his suffering *willingly;* (*a.*) in patience; (*b.*) in hope. —*Lange.*

(Addenda on ver. 19, "*Sore affliction.*")

"Some make this the lamentation of the prophet for the calamities and desolations of his country. In mournful times it becomes us to be of a mournful spirit: "*Woe is me!*" But it may be taken as the language of the people speaking as a single person. Some among them would thus bemoan themselves, and all of them, at last, would be forced to do it.

i. They lament *that the affliction is very great,* very hard for them to bear it, and more so because they had not been used to trouble, and now did not expect it. "Woe is me for my hurt;" not for what I fear, but what I feel. Not a slight hurt, but a "wound," and a wound that is "grievous."

ii. That *there is no remedy but patience.* They cannot help themselves,

but must sit still and abide it. Theirs is the language of sullen rather than of gracious submission. It argues a want of those good thoughts of God which we should have even under our afflictions; saying not, God *can* do what He wills, but "*Let Him* do as seemeth Him good."—*M. Henry.*

(Addenda on ver. 20.)

Ver. 20. Comments:

The *Targum* paraphrases the verse thus: "My land is desolate, and all my cities are plundered; my people are gone into captivity, and are no longer here."

"The suffering was unmerited in so far as the prophet and the godly amongst the people were concerned, but it was inevitable that he and they should take it upon their shoulders along with the rest."—*Graf.*

"Jerusalem laments that her tent is plundered, the cords which kept it erect rent asunder, and her children carried into exile, and so *are not*—are dead (Matt. ii. 18), either absolutely, or dead to her in the remote land of their captivity. They can aid the widowed mother no longer in pitching her tent, or in hanging up the curtains round about it."—*Speaker's Com.*

"My children are gone forth from me." "The jealousy of the Saviour is so strict, that He will have His children directed to Him (Isa. xlv. 11); and the idea of the *pastoral* office (see ver. 21) with which some good teachers are infected—of regarding and treating souls as *their* souls, sheep as *their* sheep, "children" as *their children*—is in the highest degree opposed to His will. Hence He often, for a just judgment, *does not allow their joy in souls to last*, but lets them see and conclude more of their decline and less of their success than there really is. For He will not give His glory to another, and the teachers are not Christ, but sent by Him before Him."—*Zinzendorf.*

Ver. 21. "The pastors are become brutish," &c. "As sheep must either starve or be led to filthy and poisonous pasture, if their shepherds are fools, who do not know how to manage sheep; so is this much more the case in the spiritual pastorate."—*Cramer.*

"The cause of this calamity is that the shepherds, *i.e.*, the princes and leaders of the people, are become "brutish," *have "not sought Jehovah," i.e.*, have not sought wisdom and guidance from the Lord. And so they could not "*deal wisely*," *i.e.*, rule the people with wisdom. "Prosper" is not here, have prosperity, but show wisdom, deal wisely, securing thus the blessed results of wisdom."—*Keil.*

"Therefore they shall not prosper." Rather, *have not governed wisely.* The verb has the sense of (1) acting prudently, (2) being prosperous as the necessary consequence. Here all the versions take in the first sense. The kings and rulers, having sunk to the condition of barbarous and untutored men, could not govern wisely, and so "all their flocks," literally. *their pasturing*, that which they governed, "are scattered."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 22. "Behold, a voice is heard! it comes!" &c. "A last watch-call and signal, which denotes that the enemy so frequently announced is present."—*Lange.*

"Already is heard the tremendous din of a mighty host which approaches from the north. The *great commotion* is that of an army on the march, the clattering of the weapons, the stamping and neighing of the war-horses."—*Keil.*

"Bruit," *rumour* of invasion. The antithesis is between the *voice of God* in His prophets, to which they paid no heed, and the *cry of the enemy*, to which they must attend.

"There is a contrast to be understood between the voice of God, which had constantly resounded in Judea, and the tumultuous clamours of enemies. The prophet declares that new teachers were now come, who would address them in another and unusual manner. 'I have spent my labour many years in vain. I now turn you over to the Chaldeans; they shall teach you.'"—*Calvin.*

Ver. 23. *Theme:* MAN'S CAREER UNDER GOD'S CONTROL.

The Jews regarded this as asserting

that *Nebuchadnezzar could not do as he listed.* God's will ruled his action and restrained his fury; he came to the land by Divine leading, he could deal with the people only as God permitted. More properly this declares that the *Jews themselves had been relying on their own counsels and devices* for the national safety and welfare, negotiating with Assyria when danger was apprehended from Egypt, and with Egypt or Babylon when Assyria was dreaded; but the national policy was futile, their hopes and designs were of no avail. True of us; *our life and career are not wholly in our keeping;* our planning is often frustrated; a Divine direction and determination overrule our movements.

I. Conscious liberty. "The way of man;" his *own* way. He obeys only (so far as he feels and knows) the impulses of his own nature, the determinations of his own judgment, the resolutions of his own will.

II. Unconscious control. "The way of man is not *in himself.*" His way is in *God's power* and God's *purpose.*

III. Unsurrendered volition. "Man that *walketh.*" As these Jews were doing, in defiance of the prophet's appeals and God's warnings. As Nebuchadnezzar would walk in obedience to his lust of empire. As we walk, "turning every one of us to his own way." Man insists on his right of self-government.

IV. Insufficient discernment. "Not in man *to direct* his steps," *i.e.*, he is (1) *bewildered in judgment,* so that he often does not know how to walk, what to do—can act, but not foresee issues; (2) *inconstant in will,* so that he changes his course frequently in life, influenced by his own caprice or by altered circumstances; (3) *incapable in self-government,* for he finds a warfare raging within him, "so that he cannot do the things he would;" he cannot carry out his own resolutions—weakness arrests him; he is not the master of his own nature—evil is there, passion vanquishes his purposes, fear makes him cowardly, indolence holds him in the snare of indifference or inaction.

V. Involuntary submission. "O LORD, it is not in *man.*" In whom then? God *holds the impulses of our* nature in His control. He has *free entrance into the secret chambers* of our affections and thoughts. His Spirit can "*witness* within us" and "*work within us to will and to do* of His good pleasure." He can *alter the circumstances* around us which lead us to modify our plans. He can *lay inducements* in our path. He can *check our course* by affliction, &c. He can *help us to do* otherwise impossible things.

Believers *bow their wills to God* as an act of filial submission, but the grace to do it was God-given. Sinners *yield their love and faith to Christ,* but the persuasives thereto were Divine. Rebels *rise in defiance* against Him, but He curbs their fury, uses their rage, and "restrains the remainder of their wrath." "*Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther.*"

(Addenda on ver. 23, "*God's control of man's career.*")

Notes: Blayney, following the *Syriac,* renders the verse, "I know Jehovah, that His way is not like that of men; nor like a human being doth He proceed to order His going." It is inadmissible: לוֹ should have preceded "Jehovah," marking the objective case.

"He first acknowledges that man cannot direct "HIS WAY," his *path in life,* himself; dependent as it is only in part upon his own will, and in part upon the conduct of others, and everywhere upon God. There is an antithesis between "*man,*" *i.e.*, any man, in the first clause, and the word "man" in the second clause, *i.e., man in his strength.* The strong man may fancy that at least each single "STEP" is under his own control, even if his whole path, or "way," be not; but God declares otherwise. (Prov. xvi. 9).—*Speaker's Com.*

"*Theme:* MAN PROPOSES, GOD DISPOSES. This is—i. A humbling of our pride. ii. A strong support of our hope."—*Naeg.*

Ver. 24. *Theme:* MERCIFUL CHASTISEMENT. "Correct me not in anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing."

Israel had wished in his own strength to walk in his own way, contrary to the

will of God (ver. 23). He now recognises the sinfulness of this wilful rejection of God's control, and submits to the merited chastisement—be it even national humiliation and exile; but, while bowing to this, pleads for the utmost possible mildness and forbearance. This prophetic language sets forth Israel's future repentance and restoration.

I. Surrender to gracious chastisement. The soul recognises it as *needful*, and bows resigned; and there is no agony of dismay in the thought, "Let me fall into the hands of the Lord." "O Lord, *correct me.*"

II. Shrinking from full retribution. "Correct me, *but with judgment.*" With mildness, in opposition with "anger." The transgressor cannot bear the treatment he deserves, and for which his sins make demand. It would issue in destruction. No soul could survive. Hence the plea, "*with judgment*," as "*knowing our frame* and remembering we are dust;" with moderation and leniency.

III. Terror of God's wrath. "*Not in anger.*" For "we are consumed in Thy wrath." The soul of man stands in dismay before the thought of Omnipotence wielding itself in anger! The child of God trembles in the anticipation of His displeasure. Suffering and even calamity can be borne, but not a Father's wrath. *That* would give the keenest pang to heaviest affliction; but the stroke will not crush the heart if God only corrects in mercy. Who will dare provoke and brave the "wrath of Almighty God"?

IV. Consequences of Divine severity. "*Bring me to nothing.*" Surely so; if the rocks tremble and the earth smokes at His "*look*," if angels must veil themselves from His *glory*, how can frail man other than perish at His *rebuke*, how survive His *anger*? Is this annihilation? Not in text; but only "diminish me," make me little (margin): *i.e.*, reduce Judah to an insignificant people. *Calvin*, however, says, "The prophet takes diminution here for demolition." But the history of the nation shows the people not destroyed, but only *diminished* and *dishonoured*. Such is the issue of Divine displeasure.

Happy they who by prayer and propitiation (in Christ) avert the "anger" and find mercy. (Addenda on ver. 24, "*Lenient correction.*")

Ver. 25. *Theme:* FURY FOR THE IMPIOUS OPPRESSOR. (Addenda on ver. 25.)

i. *Guilty of cruelty to God's people.* "Eaten up Jacob, devoured and consumed him."

ii. *Gratifying thus their hatred to true religion.* Not acting reverently, as agents of God's purpose, but impiously. "Know Thee not; call not on Thy name."

iii. *Meriting therefore the fury they have poured out on others.* "With what measure ye mete," &c. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of Mine eye." "*Pour out Thy fury* upon the heathen."

iv. *Suffering the doom of enemies of God.* For the malicious deeds of the Babylonians showed them impious, implacable, *foes of Jehovah* as well as His people. They treated His holy Temple and its sacred treasures with ruthless scorn, and blasphemed His great name. Hence, *having insulted God*, they should suffer "*His* fury." "So let Thine enemies perish, O God."

Note:—This verse is reproduced in Ps. lxxix. 6, 7, which was written during the exile, or at least after the Chaldeans had destroyed Jerusalem.

"*Theme:* How we should behave under the chastisements of God. i. Humbly submit to them as necessary and wholesome means of improvement. ii. Be certain that they will not then transgress those bounds, nor proceed to our destruction."—*Lange.*

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER X.

Topic: BEREAVED OF CHILDREN. *Text:* "*My children are gone forth of me, and they are not; there is none to stretch forth my tent any more*" (ver. 20).

The cry of dread from aged Jacob, "If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved;" the anguish of Rachel's lament, "weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they were not;" and this pathetic dirge of Zion, "Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: my children are not!"—all denote this loss of children to be one of life's *heaviest* yet *commonest* sorrows.

Danger when in trouble of thinking our case wholly and hopelessly dark: "All things against me!" But see: "*Truly this a grief!*" Terrible indeed, yet only one, standing alone amid ten thousand kindneses, and after long years of forbearance and grace. Bright days, sunny and happy, go on multiplying without our heeding them; suddenly one day of gloom and storm breaks the order; then we properly say, "This is a dreary day, but we must not murmur." And so the years of life go by in peace and prosperity; suddenly a grievous sorrow interrupts the course of enjoyment; shall we not say, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it"—not sullenly but submissively,—"remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High"?

I. Desolating bereavement. "Children gone forth from me, and *they are not.*" Then it is so that—

1. "*Children*" *may be taken away.* They seem to belong to us; we entwine our love around them, and rest hopes on them, as though none could or should touch them. But they are not ours; "no power over spirit to retain it." Let *parents* heed it, and hold them from God, for God. They may not live to inherit our worldly substance; lead them early to know Christ, and "lay hold on eternal life." Let the *young* heed it: children may die: early seek and serve the Lord!

2. *Home is desolated by their loss.* "Tabernacle spoiled, cords broken." Seems now that light of home is all darkened, flowers all withered, music all silenced. Suggests for children and the young—your power to make home beautiful and glad. Let your life there be a joy and perpetual blessing.

3. *Hopes built upon our "children" may fail us.* "There is none to stretch tent," &c. Naturally we look to them for our earthly future, to surround us with comfort, "set up curtains;" to minister to and solace us in hoar years. This makes their loss so sad: destroys our hopes, and leaves us helpless against years and infirmities. Oh, how often warned against "making flesh our arm." "Put not trust in man, whose breath is in his nostrils," &c. *God is needful* to us all, and He not fail. Christ essential, and He "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Rest not on what is so fleeting: "They are gone forth, and *are not.*" Our sweetest earthly hopes may perish.

II. Bitterest grief. "Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous."

1. *The distress over bereavement finds outlet in lamentations.* Natural to mourn: "Jesus wept." Let the stricken spirit raise its bitter outcry, even as Rachel. God does not forbid or despise tears. "In all your afflictions He is afflicted." Remember "the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief." He would bear your sorrow, and open to you the sympathy and solace of His tender heart.

2. *There was sore occasion for such grief.* Calamity had befallen Zion. Look at those words, "*woe*," and "*my hurt.*" They tell that a *sudden blow had fallen heavily on her.* All disastrous events fall suddenly; we never prepared for them; strike us to the earth alarmed, "hurt;" and we cry, "Woe is me for my hurt!" In such sudden sorrow we want the Saviour's instant succour: "Brother born for adversity." More: "My *wound* is *grievous.*" The stroke makes a "wound" not to be quickly healed: "grievous," indicating the severity of the hurt, the depths of the pang. "My children are not"—it means a lifelong wound. "My tabernacle

is spoiled"—the joy of earth can never be complete again. Not mock the stricken with the assurance "Time will heal." No, "the wound is *grievous:*" rather speak of the restoration; tell *Zion* of exiles' return to her; tell *bereaved* of nearing day, when "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, but former things are passed away."

III. Patient resignation. "But I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it." First comes the wild outcry of "Woe!" succeeded by the hushed sob of submission.

1. *It was felt that the loss would not be alleviated by abandonment to grief.* To nurse our sorrow only leads to repining; then life becomes "a waste, howling wilderness." Not yield to fruitless anguish, but seek grace to bear it with composure, and to turn ourselves with all possible courage and heartiness to what *duties* are around us, and to what *comforts* Heaven has preserved.

2. *It was recognised as from the Lord, and therefore bowed to with submission.* Sudden, desolating, terrifying the calamity, but the hand of God was in the event. Not easy to say, "Thy will be done!" "It is the Lord, let Him do," &c. Yet make the endeavour and say, "Truly a grief, and I must bear it!" "God cannot afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Doubt not His love, His wisdom, His grace. "Oh, rest in the Lord." Draw near Him for comfort, and cast on Him the burden of your loneliness and grief. "He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." (Addenda on ver. 20, "*Bereaved of children.*")

Topic: PROGRESSION AND DIRECTION. *Text:* "*It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (ver. 23).

Self-distrust the teaching of long discipline: the more tried and advanced the believer, the more unreservedly will he say, with Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 7; and that saying, as then, will "please the Lord."

I. Natural action. "*Man that walketh.*" Man's action in life complex, involving two distinct parts, of which he has only one in himself—the power of natural action.

1. *Its ease.* It is just the simple putting forth of the power of life; going on, without thinking if right or wrong. Danger of forgetting a deficiency in this part-progression: mistake a part for the whole. We think we can act aright, simply because we have the power of action at all. It is as if ship could reach the port just because she has undoubted capacities for sailing, though no helmsman or compass.

2. This mere power of natural action *has a tendency to mislead.* It makes a man unreflective. Proneness to slight the invisible, because it does not intrude itself upon us, although the things of this life have inseparable association with those hidden from sight in another world. Thus man's "walk" may do much as regards this life, but alas! how little effect for the world beyond! Leads to a *waste of strength;* for toil where nothing can be taken, and inaction where much might be won. We often wonder there is so much failure where there is so much energy. The value of pausing amid the bustle of action.

II. Needful direction. Direction is often the remedy for all this failure (Ps. cxix. 133 and 105). Once let us be persuaded we cannot guide ourselves, and we would never willingly lose all the results of our labour by working at random.

1. *Take care to go out of ourselves for direction.* Shall not remedy the matter by *taking more thought.* When we have done much in that way, it will only be "man that walketh" directing his own steps; doing it more carefully, but still doing it himself. This going out of self may be humiliating.

2. *The advantages of this going out of self.* There will flow in upon us "the

wisdom from above;" from the Father of lights. He will show us things in new lights altogether, that see them in their entirety.

3. *But we must yield ourselves to God to be ordered.* Content to be led "by ways we know not." Not troubling ourselves with continual questionings on the subject. Trust Him to choose the road; even though it seem to lead away from the desired end. St. Augustine said, "I am a little child, but my Father is my sufficient guardian."

4. *Ways are not really open because apparently so.* Not because we can do this thing or that, is it therefore right. Because of this error, we have often gone into spheres where God is not, and where we should not have been.

5. *Success before the world is not, therefore, a proof of our being right,* nor of success in our relationship towards God. Failure here, leaves our work but as "wood, hay, stubble." Danger of being too eager for success. So that what appears success to us may not be so at all, and may be a prelude to heavy loss.

6. *Learn not to put implicit confidence in energy or action.* It is likely to mislead; it may make the "*man*" prominent in us, and not God. And a very little thing may put a sudden stop to it.

Conclusion: Bind together the two ideas of *our own foolishness* and *God's wisdom.* We never learn a depressing truth concerning ourselves without an encouraging one concerning God. We are to be emptied out of ourselves to be filled with Him. Under His guidance, our calm progress in "ordered ways" will lead in God's own time to happy ends.—*Abstract of "Breviates," by P. B. Power, M.A.*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER X.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 2. "The signs of heaven." Which the blind heathens feared and deified, and none did more than the Syrians, the Jews' next neighbours. Experience frequently confuteth those vain astrologers that pretend to read men's fates and fortunes in the heavens, as it did Abraham the Jew, who foretold by the stars the coming of their Messiah A.D. 1464; and Albumazar, a Mohammedan wizard, who predicted an end of the Christian religion A.D. 1460 at utmost. A great flood was foretold by these diviners to fall out in the year 1524, *cum planetæ comita in piscibus celebrarent.* This caused the Prior of St. Bartholomew, in London, wise-man-like, to go and build him a house at Harrow-on-the-Hill, for his better security. Muleasses, king of Tunis, a great star-gazer, foreseeing by them, as he said, the loss of his kingdom and life together, left Africa that he might shun that mischief; but thereby he hastened it, A.D. 1544. God suffereth sometimes such fond predictions to fall out right upon men for a just punishment of their curiosity.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 3. Idol manufacture. In India, it is computed, there are 30,000,000 of idols. British Christians should remember the idolatry of their ancestors. "In Scotland there was a temple of Mars; in Cornwall, of Mercury; in Bangor, of Minerva; in Bath, of Apollo; in Leicester, of Janus; in York, where St. Peter's now stands, the temple of Bellona; in London, on the site of St. Paul's Cathedral, the temple of Diana; and at Westminster, where the Abbey rears its venerable pile, a temple of Apollo."—*Dr. Plaifere.*

Ver. 5. Idols "must needs be borne." Missionaries in India were once proclaiming the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, when one of the audience cried, "Jesus is the true God!" Others caught the cry and reiterated it, till the whole group burst into response. Then they shouted "Come with us, and pull down our temples, and cast our gods down the hills." They led the way, and soon the helpless idol was carried along—for though it had legs it could not walk—to the brow of a neighbouring hill, and flung contemptuously over.

It is a fact and a sight to be met

with any day in Madras and other large European cities: a set of *hired bearers* will carry one day on their shoulders a *hideous idol*, ornamented with gold and gems, and the next day the same hired bearers will carry forth in state the *Virgin Mary*.—*Biblical Treasury.*

Ver. 6. "NONE LIKE THEE, O LORD." All things in the natural world symbolise God, yet none of them speak of Him but in broken and imperfect words. High above all He sits, sublimer than mountains, grander than storms, sweeter than blossoms and tender fruits, nobler than lords, truer than parents, more loving than lovers. His feet tread the lowest places of the earth, but His head is above all glory, and everywhere He is supreme.—*Beecher.*

"THY NAME IS GREAT IN MIGHT." A Jew entered a Persian temple, and saw there the sacred fire. He said to the priest, "How do you worship fire?"—"Not the fire: it is to us an emblem of the sun and of his animating light," said the priest. The Israelite continued, "You dazzle the eye of the body, but darken that of the mind; in presenting the terrestrial light you take away the celestial." The Persian asked, "How do *you name* the Supreme Being?"—"We call Him JEHOVAH ADONAI; that is, the Lord who was, who is, and shall be."—"Your word is great and glorious, but it is terrible," said the Persian. A Christian approaching, said, "We call Him, "*Abba, Father.*" Then the Persian and the Jew regarded each other with surprise, and said, "Your word is the nearest and *the highest;* but who gives you courage to call the Eternal thus?"—"The Father Himself," said the Christian, who then expounded to them the plan of redemption.—*Krummacher.*

Ver. 10. "THE TRUE GOD." "How many Gods are there?" was once asked of a boy. "One."—"How do you know there is only one?"—"Because there is no room for more, for He fills heaven and earth."

The Egyptian hieroglyphic, representing God, was a winged globe and a serpent coming out of it: the *globe* to signify God's eternity, the *wings* His active power, and the *serpent* His wisdom.—*Bowes.*

Two gentlemen were once disputing on the divinity of Christ: one of them, who argued against it, said, "If it were true, certainly it would have been expressed in more clear and unequivocal terms." "Well," said the other, "admitting that you believed it, were you authorised to teach it, and allowed to use your own language, how would you express the doctrine to make it indubitable?"—"I would say," replied he, "that Jesus Christ is *the true God.*"—"You are very happy," replied the other, "in the choice of your words, for you have happened to hit upon the very words of inspiration; for John, speaking of the Son, says, 'This is THE TRUE GOD, and eternal life.'"—*Wilson.*

Ver. 11–13. AN APPEAL TO GOD'S WORKS.

"Who guides below and rules above,
The great Disposer and the mighty King;
Than He none greater, next Him none
That can be, is, or was:
Supreme, He singly fills the throne."
HORACE.

An Arab, when one day asked, "How do you know there is a God?" turned indignantly upon the questioner, and replied, "How do I know whether a man or a camel passed my tent last night?" *His own footprints* in creation and providence testify of Him.

Ver. 14. WORSHIP OF IDOLS DEBASES THE WORSHIPPER. The gods of Greece and Rome had at least human features, and modelled after the likeness of men; but among the millions of the gods of India *affecting the character of their worshippers*, there is not one which represents a virtue, not one which is not a monster of iniquity. Brahma is acknowledged by the Hindoos themselves as too bad to be worshipped. Their god, Shiva, is distinguished for his revenge and malignity; Krishna bears a character of a notorious licentious proffigate; Juggernaut is represented by an old idol without legs and arms, because the legs and arms of the god were cut off by a sentence of the gods for his

incurable iniquity. What but impurity and cruelty can be the result of a religion which has such patrons in its god?—*Dictionary of Illustrations.*

"Any *opinion* which tends to keep out of sight the living and loving God, whether it be to substitute for Him an idol, or any occult agency, or a formal creed, can be nothing better than the portentous shadow projected from the slavish darkness of an ignorant heart."—*Hallam.*

Ver. 19. SORE AFFLICTION.

As they lay copper in aquafortis before they begin to engrave it, so the Lord usually prepares us by searching, softening discipline of affliction for making a deep, lasting impression upon our hearts.—*Nottidge.*

There is as much difference between the sufferings of the saints and those of the ungodly as between the bandages wherewith the tender surgeon binds his patients and the cords with which an executioner pinions a condemned malefactor.—*Arrowsmith.*

One in affliction, when asked how he bore it so well, replied, "It lightens the stroke to draw near to Him who handles the rod."

Ver. 20. BEREAVED OF CHILDREN.

"Death lies on her, like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field."
SHAKSPEARE.

Bengel had twelve children, of whom half died in infancy. He said, when speaking of his loss, "As little children give their sweetmeats to their parents to keep for them, so my pleasant things are safer in God's keeping than in that of my own treacherous heart."—*Bowes.*

Elliot said of the death of his children, "I have had six children, and I bless God they are all either *in* Christ or *with* Christ, and my mind is now at rest concerning them."—*Ibid.*

"I cried, 'Lord, spare my child!' He did; but not as I meant. He snatched it from danger, and took it to His own home."—*Cecil.*

"See, father," said a lad, "they are knocking away the props from under the bridge. What are they doing that for? Won't the bridge fall?"—"They are knocking them away," said the father, "that the timbers may rest more firmly upon the stone piers, which are now finished." God only takes away our earthly helps that we may rest firmly upon Him.

A lady in one day, during her husband's absence from home, lost both her children by cholera. With a mother's anguish of heart she covered a sheet over them, and awaited her husband's return. "A Person lent me some jewels," she said when she met him, "and now he wishes them again? What shall I do?"—"Return them, by all means," said her husband. Then she led the way, and silently uncovered to him the forms of his dear children.—*Dictionary of Illustrations.*

Ver. 23. GOD'S CONTROL OF MAN'S CAREER.

"The wish, which ages have not yet subdued
In man, to have no other master but his mood."—BYRON.

"Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well
When our deep plots do pall: and that should teach us
There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will."—SHAKESPEARE.

"A wheel within a wheel's the Scripture notion,
And all those wheels traverse and cross in motion.
All creatures serve it in their place; yet so
As thousands of them know not what they do:
At this or that their aim they do direct,
But neither this nor that is the effect.
Men are, like horses, set at every stage,
For Providence to ride from age to age;
Which, like a post, spurs on, and makes them run
From stage to stage, until their journey's done;
Then takes a fresh: but they the business know
No more than horses the post-letters do.
Yet though its work be now concealed from sight,
'Twill be a glorious piece when brought to light."—FLAVEL.

"Certum est, nos velle, cum volumus, sed ille facit, ut velimus bonum, de quo dictum est, quod præparatur voluntas a Domino (Prov. viii. 35). Certum est, non facere, cum facimus, sed ille facit, ut faciamus præbendo vires efficacissimas voluntati, qui dixit; faciam ut in justi-

fications meis ambuletis et judicia mea observetis (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27)." —*Augustine.*

Ver. 24. **Lenient correction.** "Correction is not simply to be deprecated. The prophet here cries, 'Correct me;' David saith, 'It was good for me;' Job calleth God's afflicting of us His magnifying of us (chap. viii. 17). *Feri Domine, feri clementer; ipse paratus sum,* saith Luther,—Smite, Lord, smite me, but gently, and I am ready to bear it patiently. King Alfred prayed God to send him always some sickness, whereby his body might be tamed, and he the better disposed and affectioned towards God."—*Trapp.*

Ver. 25. **Fury for the oppressor.** This is not a New Testament aspect of God; gracious towards Israel, tempering affliction with mercy, but severe and wrathful, with no restraining of anger, towards the heathen. Rather, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Pray for them that despitefully use you." Hence the true piety of the Prayer-Book petition: "*That it may please Thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; and turn their hearts.*"

CHAPTER XI.

Critical and Exegetical Notes.—1. **Chronology of the Chapter.**—The "covenant" summarised in ver. 2–5 refers to the nation's renewal of vows with Jehovah upon the Book of the Law being discovered during Josiah's reign. The prevalency of idolatry (ver. 13) seems to point back to the public establishment of idol-worship under Manasseh. Both these allusions favour an early date for this and chap. xii.—*i.e., during Josiah's reign, cir.* B.C. 620. (So Keil and Dr. Payne Smith.) Others (Maurer, Hitzig, Umbriet, and Graff) find in chap. xii. 14 (which is a continuation of this chap.) a reference to the "neighbours" spoken of in 2 Kings xxiv. 2. If this be so, the chapter must date at the *end of Jehoiakim's reign, cir.* B.C. 600. But the absence of all explicit mention of the Chaldeans (Lange), shows this prophecy to have been delivered before Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem; for, after the battle at Charchemish, Jeremiah invariably specifies the Chaldeans by name. Hence the chapter is assigned to the *first or second year of Jehoiakim, cir.* B.C. 610. Probably Bleek is correct in assigning ver. 1–17 to Josiah's reign, and ver. 18–xii. 17 to Jehoiakim's reign.

2. **Contemporary Scriptures.**—2 Kings xxiii. 34–37; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 4, 5.

3. **National Affairs.**—Jehoiakim on the throne. Quick development of the nation's apostasy from Jehovah, and revulsion from Josiah's reforms, led on by the impiety of the king.

4. **Cotemporary History.**—Egypt at this time (first or second year of Jehoiakim) enjoying a short-lived ascendancy over the Babylonian domination. This international supremacy, however, was speedily wrested from Pharaoh-Necho by Nebuchadnezzar in the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

5. **Geographical References.**—Ver. 5. "*A land flowing with milk and honey:*" the euphemism for the fertile and beautiful Land of Promise, *cf.* Exod. iii. 8, 17; Deut. vi. 3, &c. Ver. 23. "*Anathoth.*" See *Crit. Notes* and *Geog. References* on chap. i. 1, *in loc.*

6. **Personal Allusions.**—Ver. 21. "*Men of Anathoth:*" these would be the acquaintances of Jeremiah in his youth, and even his relatives (xii. 6). It is on record that the "men of Anathoth," 128 in number, returned from exile with Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 23; Neh. vii. 27; 1 Esdras v. 18).

7. **Natural History.**—Ver. 16. "*Green olive-tree, and of goodly fruit:*" olive very common in Judea; of two kinds, the cultivated and the wild; the latter a mere bush, the former grows to the average height of 25 feet. Its leaves are of a refreshing green hue, conspicuous in contrast with the foliage of darker trees. An object of "beauty" (Hos. xiv. 6); an evergreen. Its "*fruit*" is at first green; in its early stage almost white, tinged with yellow; in its maturity, a rich purple, almost black: rich to the taste. Particularly famed for the oil it so abundantly yields.

8. **Manners and Customs.**—Ver. 4. "*The iron furnace:*" metaphorical reference to Egypt; a figure used by Moses (Deut. iv. 20). Ver. 19. "*As a lamb* (see *Lit. Crit.* below) *led to the slaughter:*" a tamed pet lamb, which afterwards had to be killed.

9. **Literary Criticisms.**—Ver. 2. "*Hear ye, and speak ye:*" the plurals שִׁמְעוּ and דַּבֵּרְתֶּם, indicate that not Jeremiah alone, but others in the nation, were, if not commissioned, yet urged to publish the "covenant" (comp. 2 Kings xxiii. 2; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 30). Ver. 5. "*So be it.*

O Lord," אָמֵן יְהוָה; lit. "*Amen, Jehovah:*" it was the precise response which was required by the law (Deut. xxvii. 14–27), and was Jeremiah's solemn assent. Ver. 6. "*Proclaim:*" קְרָא, *read aloud* (Hitzig, Graff, Lange), as in 2 Kings xxii. 8, 10, 16; but it means *declare* as used by Jeremiah, chap. ii. 2, iii. 12 (Keil). Ver. 8. "*The imagination,*" *i.e.*, stubbornness (*cf.* iii. 17). Ver. 13. "*That shameful thing . . . Baal.*" See *Lit. Crit.* on chap. iii. 24. Ver. 15. "*What hath my beloved to do?*" &c. The text is corrupt and obscure. The words, "*with many,*" בְּרַבִּים, is better disconnected from the words, "wrought lewdness." The LXX. read the word as הַנְּדָרִים, or (as Maurer, Graff, &c., suggest) הֲרָנִים; *i.e.*, vows or prayers, and read, *Will vows and holy flesh* (*i.e.*, sacrifices) *take away thy sins?* Retaining the word in the text as it is, by הָרִבִּים must be understood, *thy great ones*, princes; and then read: *thy great ones*, in which thy earthly strength consists; *and thy sacrifices*, on which depends thy religious sanctity, *shall pass away from thee* (Speaker's Com.). *Keil* renders the verse, "What would My beloved in My house? they who practise guile? Shall vows and holy flesh remove thy calamity from thee? then mayest thou exult." *Blayney*: "Shall vows and holy flesh be allowed to come from thee? When thou art malignant, shalt thou then rejoice?" *Dr. Payne Smith*: "What hath My beloved in My house, to practise guile there? The chiefs and the holy flesh shall pass away from thee. When thy evil (is done) then thou rejoicest." Ver. 19. "*Like a lamb or an ox:*" כֶּבֶשׂ אלוף, *i.e.* a *lamb domesticated.* אַלּוּף is an adjective, *familiar, intimate,* "a *tame* lamb" (Gesenius). The substantive אֶלֶף is "*ox,*" so called as being *tamed* by familiar use. "*Let us destroy the tree with the fruit:* לֶחֶם, *fruit*; prop. *food*, especially *bread.* The LXX. render it ἐμβάλωμεν ξύλον εἰς τὸν ἄρτον αὐτοῦ, *let us cast wood into his bread, i.e.*, poisonous wood. *Targum*: "Let us cast deadly poison into his food." Ver. 20. "*Let me see Thy vengeance upon them:*" אֶרְאֶה is future, "*I shall see,*" anticipating God's vindication and interposition.

HOMILETICS ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XI.

Section 1–8. Jehovah's covenant.
" 9–13. Idolatrous conspiracy.
" 14–17. Mediation and sacrifice unacceptable.
" 18–23. Murderers in ambush.

Ver. 1–8. Jehovah's Covenant.

It was the one solemn compact which God made with Israel; never altered, never superseded. By it this nation first became the Lord's, and Jehovah pledged Himself to be their God. On its being faithfully observed, Israel's very existence and distinction as a theocracy depended. Wonderful: it had for many years been *lost;* only found as by accident, during Josiah's renovation of the temple. (See Addenda, ver. 2, "*The lost book of the covenant found.*") Worse: it had been *ignored* by the whole nation; they regarded not the sacred charter given on Sinai, and revolted from Jehovah with indifference as to results. Yet has not *humanity* equally "broken the covenant," apostatised from God, and virtually cancelled the solemn compact which united God in gracious relationship? "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself."

I. The terms of this Divine covenant. "Obey My voice," &c. (ver. 4, 5). 1. *It proposed a gracious relationship.* "So shall ye be My people, and I will be your God." 2. *It pledged a glorious inheritance.* "To give a land flowing with milk and honey." 3. *It depended on absolute conditions.* "Obey, and do according to all which I command you." (*a.*) The terms were unambiguous; "obey, and do." (*b.*) The response must be unhesitating and uncompromising; "*all* I command." (*c.*) Jehovah alone was to be their Lawgiver and God; "*I* will be your God"—"do according to all *I* command."

II. The circumstances which emphasised this covenant. "Which I commanded your fathers in the day," &c. (ver. 4). 1. *The national crisis* when it was made. This is noteworthy; "*in the day,*" &c. When Israel was just escaping from the oppressions and degradations which well-nigh denationalised the people. This covenant was made "in the day" of their emancipation. 2. *The miraculous*

experience which immediately preceded it. This is equally remarkable, "I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt." 3. *The miseries from which they were freed* lent special significance to this Divine act; "the iron furnace." In return for all this, which should have ensured unfaltering loyalty and devoted *gratitude*, God asked, "Obey My voice."

III. The importunity with which God instituted the covenant. "For I earnestly protested," &c. (ver. 7). It denotes—1. *The Divine earnestness and anxiety.* (*a.*) God *fervently desired* this relationship; (*b.*) He ratified *the covenant* amid the most solemn asseverations, "earnestly protested;" (*c.*) He *recognised the perils* which menaced it, for it was made with "your fathers"—fickle, wavering *men.* 2. *The fervent reiteration of the compact.* "Even unto this day; rising up early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice." So that with "line upon line, precept upon precept," God *encouraged* them to fidelity and *protested* against disloyalty.

IV. The penalty attached to a breach of the covenant. It was made a condition of *blessings;* God should be their God, and Canaan their possession (ver. 5): but there was also appended a "*curse*" if it were violated (ver. 3). 1. *There is a black alternative of every promise.* 2. *By the terrors of the Lord men are to be urged* to fidelity. Not alone allured by promises, but menaced by curses; for Jehovah may not be trifled with by men. 3. *The individual responsibility is enforced.* "Every man;" not the nation, but the person, he who sins, shall suffer. 4. *There are ruinous penalties threatening the disobedient.* The "curse" of the **Almighty.**

V. The **lengthened period through which God had urged this covenant.** He had not grown dissatisfied with it, nor had He allowed it to pass from His thoughts, nor from Israel's attention. From "the day that I brought your fathers out of Egypt even unto this day" (ver. 7). 1. *God reckons the years of our opportunity.* 2. *He follows man during those years with persuasions and protests.* "Rising early," &c. 3. *Our criminality and responsibility will be in proportion* to the time and the persuasives.

VI. The persistent violation of this covenant. "Yet they obeyed not," &c. (ver. 8). 1. *Practical defiance;* "they obeyed not." 2. *Habitual indifference;* "nor inclined their ear." 3. *Wilful disloyalty;* "walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart."

VII. The Divine vindication of the violated covenant. "Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant." 1. *Blessings promised for obedience withdrawn.* 2. *Curses threatened for disloyalty performed.* 3. *God Himself administers judgment.* "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Ver. 9–13. Idolatrous Conspiracy.

"Jeremiah saw that many lived in open disobedience to God, but the Lord told him the matter was worse than he thought of: '*A conspiracy is found among them,*' by Him whose eye is upon the hidden things of darkness. There is a combination against God and religion, a dangerous design formed to overthrow God's government and bring in the counterfeit deities. A cursed conspiracy! Oh, that there were not the like in our day!

"I. *Observe,* **what the conspiracy was.** They designed to overthrow Divine revelation, and persuade the people not to heed the words of God: did all they could to derogate from the authority of the Scriptures, to draw people to consult other gods as their oracles and court them as their benefactors. *Human reason* shall be their god, the *light within* their god, *saints and angels* their gods, *deities of other nations* shall be theirs; thus, under several disguises, the confederacy exists 'against the Lord and against His Anointed.'

"II. **Who were in the conspiracy.** Not foreigners; but 1. 'The inhabitants of

Jerusalem with the men of Judah;' *city and country agree in this*, however they may differ in other things. 2. *This generation with the foregoing generation;* 'they are turned back to the iniquity of their forefathers,' &c. (ver. 10); a conspiracy to carry on the war from age to age against religion. The house of Israel began the revolt, but Judah soon came into the conspiracy. In Josiah's time there had been a reformation, but after his death the people returned to the idolatries they had then renounced.

"III. The chastening of the conspirators and the crushing of this conspiracy. God would take severe methods for this; for none ever hardened his heart thus against God and prospered. He that rolls this stone will find it return upon him. 'Therefore I will bring evil upon them' (ver. 11); the evil of punishment for the evil of sin; and there is no remedy, no relief. 1. *They cannot help themselves* (ver. 11). There is no fleeing from God's justice. Evil pursues sinners and entangles them in snares from which they cannot extricate themselves. 2. *Their God will not help them;* 'they shall cry unto Me,' &c. (ver. 11). 3. *Their idols shall not help them* (ver. 12). If the idols could have done any real kindness to their worshippers, they would have done it for this people, who had renounced the true God to embrace them, and had multiplied them 'according to the number of the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem.' But in their distress their many gods and many altars should stand them in no stead."—*Henry.*

Ver. 14–17. Mediation and Sacrifice Unacceptable.

These are and ever have been the sole resources of the sinful in seeking God. If He will not permit mediation (ver. 14) for transgressors, nor accept sacrifices, ("holy flesh," ver. 15; see *Lit. Crit.* on ver.), then nought remains.

I. Offerings beautiful in themselves: *mediatorial prayer* and *holy sacrifices.*

II. Offerers who might expect acceptance. 1. *Jeremiah*, who as a prophet was also an acknowledged intercessor with God for the people, and withal a man Divinely chosen and approved; *he would have offered prayers.* 2. *Judah, cherished by God* as "His beloved" (ver. 15); once *admired by God*, "called (alas! not *calls*) thy name, a green olive-tree, fair, and of goodly fruit" (ver. 16); *enstated by God in sacred possessions and privileges*, "planted thee" (ver. 17); *she would have offered "holy flesh."*

III. Offerings must represent those for whom they are made.

1. *Prayer for others*, that they may be spared and pardoned, *avails only when they also pray for themselves.* But Judah would not kneel before God for deliverance from her sins; she was prayerless, would continue so, until calamity befell her, and would then only "*cry* in her trouble," not bemoan her guilt.

2. *Sacrifices to God require that the offerers are themselves dedicated to Him.* To give Him "holy flesh" while they lived in "lewdness" (ver. 15) was a flagrant mockery. Public worship is an insolence to Heaven when it covers private immorality.

IV. Incongruous offerings refused by God. "Pray not thou for this people" (ver. 14). "What hath My beloved to do in Mine house?" (ver. 15). 1. *For those who love sin no prayer can be heard.* Even the Divine Intercessor could not pray for the soul determined in guilt. 2. *Those who live in sin defile God's house by their presence and His altar with their sacrifices.* For such persons, who, "when doing evil, rejoice," to offer aught to God is impious effrontery.

V. Mocking hypocrites doomed.

1. *There will come to such pretenders a "time of trouble"* (ver. 14); wrong will not prove always pleasant.

2. *Their former goodness will not protect them from the doom of apostates.* "Fair and goodly" they may have been; and so really so as to be called by God "His beloved;" but the goodness of former years will not atone for the guilt of

the present, nor their experience of Divine love save them from the wrath their perfidy has provoked (ver. 16).

3. *Their enstatement in Divine favour can be reversed.* "Planted" in Canaan, intrusted with "Mine house," Judah's condition suggests the case of those *within the Church of Christ*, once ostensibly (perhaps sincerely) God's people. But "if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy."

Ver. 18–23. Murderers in Ambush.

How many dangers beset us which we fail to recognise! Jeremiah had no perception of his peril until "the Lord gave him knowledge of it" (ver. 18). An eye more discerning than our own is upon the righteous; and it "neither slumbers nor sleeps." (Addenda on ver. 19.)

I. **Malevolent designs against a witness for God.** A life of godliness rebukes the guilty; and thus holy men incur their hate. Jeremiah incensed the men of Anathoth unwittingly, unwillingly; but "a good deed in a naughty world" disturbs and distresses and provokes the wicked.

1. *A concerted plot:* "They devised devices against me." 2. *A merciless purpose:* "Let us destroy, . . . cut him off from the land of the living," &c. 3. *An unsuspecting victim:* "I was like a tame lamb" (see *Lit. Crit.*). 4. *A vigilant Watcher*: "Thou showedst me their doings" (ver. 18).

II. **A holy man's secure defence amid foes** (ver. 20).

1. *Goodness rejoices in the consciousness of God's discernment.* Though evil-doers malign and plot, God "judgest righteously," recognises the unsullied virtue of His faithful servants (ver. 19). 2. *Integrity relies confidently on Divine vindication.* "I shall see Thy vengeance" (see *Lit. Crit.* on verse). God would defeat their designs. 3. *Faith finds calm shelter in Jehovah's protection.* "Unto Thee have I revealed (confided) my cause." (See 1 Pet. ii. 23.)

III. **Divine indignation towards the persecutors of His servants.** He knows them and marks them out; "the men of Anathoth." 1. *The form in which their hostility expressed itself* (ver. 21): he must keep silence or be slain; be faithless to his mission or die at their hands. It showed hatred of *God*, from whose word they recoiled. 2. *The sentence of destruction which this evoked* (ver. 22, 23). They meant Jeremiah's death; they themselves should cruelly perish. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XI

Ver. 2–5. *Theme:* Covenanted alliance. (Comp. Homily on section, *supra*.)

The word came from the Lord "to Jeremiah" (ver. 1), but to be imparted to and reiterated by others—"hear *ye*, and speak ye" (ver. 2). Some think these were other prophets; some suggest the priests of Anathoth, which might have so exasperated them that they plotted his destruction (ver. 19, 21), as the Popish priests sought the life of Savonarola because he incited them to do their duty.

This "covenant:" alluding to the Book of the Law, found by Hilkiah during Josiah's restoration of the Temple (2 Kings xxii. 8.–xxiii. 25; comp. Deut. xxvii.). (Addenda, ver. 2, "*Book of the covenant found.*") This discovery of the law occurred five years after Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office. Observe: Though the book was lost, the covenant should not have been ignored. Their past history, their present occupancy of Canaan, appealed to them concerning their sacred relationship and Jehovah's claims.

I. **God allies Himself with His people by a method peculiarly solemn and imposing.** "A covenant." 1. The terms defined. 2. Mutually binding. 3. Intended to endure. 4. The method most impressive. 5. The responsibilities great—great as are the benefits and privileges.

II. To this sacred compact God exacts from His people unfaltering adherence. They must "obey the words" (ver. 3) as the condition on which Jehovah "may perform His oath" (ver. 5). 1. God looks for their part to be performed; desires it, watches for it, eagerly, paternally. 2. He claims that their fidelity should be as full as His own; no vacillation, no compromise, no departure. 3. Is wronged by their perfidy; wounded also.

III. Violation of the covenant forfeits its blessings and ensures its penalties. Cancels the agreement for Divine benefactions, invokes instead the Divine displeasure. The faithless soul puts God's favours aside and invites the "curse." So by repudiating the salvation of Christ, the sinner imprecates judgment. 1. God earnestly desires to bless us: "So shall ye be my people" (ver. 4), "that I *may* perform the oath," &c. (ver. 5). 2. Man's conscience recognises the righteousness of the covenant: "So be it, O Lord." In the human heart there is a response to the justice of God in punishing the faithless soul, as truly as in blessing the obedient. Even in the last judgment there will be heard the human acknowledgment that "the Judge of all the earth doeth right."

Notes: The obedience here agreed for is not performance of the stern legal statutes of the law, but fulfilment of the benignant terms of a "covenant"—a gracious and reciprocal covenant. The "*covenant*" more naturally expresses itself in "Thou shalt *love:*" the law, in, Thou shalt *do*.

The crime of *slighting the alliance of love* is the greatest in itself and in its consequences. "If any man *love not* the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha" (1 Cor. xvi. 22). (Addenda, ver. 4, "*Covenant alliance of love.*")

The Jews still occupied this goodly land, and it was still affluent in natural wealth: God had thus fulfilled His part of the covenant. It remained now with His people, by keeping the terms, to decide whether this inheritance should remain theirs.

Ver. 6. *Theme:* JEHOVAH'S MESSAGE WIDELY PUBLISHED.

Most probably (so Hend., Naèg., and Speaker's Com.) Jeremiah, obeying this Divine command, journeyed with Josiah in his reforming tour through the land (2 Kings xxiii. 15–20), everywhere reading to the people the words of the newly-found book. The word "proclaim" has the meaning of *read aloud.* (See *Lit. Crit.* on verse.)

All through the land the covenant is to be heard. All over the earth the Gospel is to be published: not in "cities of Judah and streets of Jerusalem" alone, but to "all people." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

I. That none may remain in sorrowful ignorance, or have excuse for neglect. The Light must shine into darkness.

II. That all may feel the persuasiveness of the earnest call. "Faith cometh by hearing:" hearts are moved by the heavenly appeal.

III. That every hearer may clearly know the full plan of safety. "Hear the words and do them." (Comp. Rom. ii. 13; James i. 22.) "Do them:" *Trapp* remarks, "Else ye hear to no purpose; as the salamander liveth in the fire, and is not made hot by the fire; as the Ethiopian goeth black into the bath, and as black he cometh forth." (Addenda, ver. 6, Poem by Trench.)

Ver. 7, 8. *Theme:* EARNEST PERSUASION RECKLESSLY DEFIED.

Observe 1. *God Himself earnestly pleads;* "I." 2. *God persistently pleads;* "in the day I brought them out of Egypt, even unto this day." 3. *God fervently pleads,* vehemently, with pathos and power; "protesting." 4. *God anxiously pleads;* "rising up early," &c., as one too concerned and troubled to rest. (See on chap. vii. 13. Addenda, ver. 7, "*Rising early.*")

Yet, (1) *Men oppose God in practice;* "obeyed not." (2) *Refuse God their attention;* "nor incline their ear." (3) *Pursue their own defiant course;* "walked every one in the imagination ("stubbornness," see on chap. iii. 17) of their evil

heart." (4) *Turn God's goodness into inevitable anger;* "therefore will I bring upon them," &c. (See 2 Kings xvii. 13, *ff.*)

Ver. 9, 10. *Theme:* DELIBERATE COMBINATION AGAINST GOD.

The decisive course being now pursued by king Josiah in exterminating idolatry had led the opponents of the king's purpose into determined league against his reformatory schemes; or the general dislike which prevailed among the people for this overthrow of their cherished idolatry may be meant. The consentaneous disapproval of the nation is spoken of as being a preconcerted opposition, a "conspiracy."

Note, that *opposition to religious work*, and workers for Jehovah (Josiah the king and Jeremiah the prophet), is in truth *a conspiracy against God Himself.* So when Christ arrested Saul of Tarsus with the challenge "Why persecutest thou *Me?*" (Addenda, ver. 9, "*Conspiracy against God.*")

I. **The darkness of the human heart.** Rebelled against the reformation; rose in resistance of the king's work of purifying the land. "Love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "Heart desperately wicked."

II. **The antagonism of man towards God.** Any idol, any number of idols, will men rear and serve, but not Jehovah. "We will not have Thee," &c. "My people love to have it so" (chap. v. 31).

III. **The deliberate purpose to defeat God's work.** Men combine to frustrate the designs of the Almighty. They determine to oppose those who would evangelise the world. They meet the progress of religion with combined and deliberate assaults. Guilt is *implacable, defiant, restless.* It hates God and godliness. They had "taken counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed" (Ps. ii. 2, 3). Note, that their idolatry was *not the issue of ignorance*—they would not exchange it for Jehovah; nor was it *the result of a hasty impulse*, but deliberate design (Ps. lxxxiii. 5); nor was the national relapse into idolatry after Josiah's death the *consequence of indifference*, but of a set purpose, a "conspiracy" (ver. 10).

IV. **The confederacy for sin suffices to prevail over mutual estrangement.** To oppose God and His kingdom men—mutually antagonistic—will ally themselves. (See ver. 10.) "The house of Israel and the house of Judah," the two kingdoms which were in fierce hostility one to another politically, became conspirators against the God whose goodness gave them national existence and political power. Men can forswear their own antagonisms, when impiety is in the ascendant, in order to trample God's claims beneath their feet in scorn. But "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." "These (ten kings) *have one mind*, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast; these shall *make war with the Lamb*, and the Lamb shall overcome them," &c. (Rev. xvii. 12–14).

Ver. 11–13. *Theme:* THE CRY OF THE GODLESS IN CALAMITY. (See Homily, and Notes on chap. ii. 28, also on sections, chap. ii. 14–28.)

"Cry unto Me," contrasted with "cry unto the gods." "I will *not hearken* unto them;" set over against "they shall *not save* them at all." God also places in juxtaposition *His own power* to afflict —"I will bring evil"—with the *idols' powerlessness* to help them. Note, too, that the "thing" for which the people deserted God is "a shameful thing;" in itself a degraded object, in its rites and orgies loathsome, and certain to cover with shame those who worship and trust in it. With the one true God alienated, and all false gods, however numerous (ver. 13), proved to be worthless and impotent, none to "hearken" or "save" though they "cry"—how desolate the outlook of the impious when the day of sore trouble and dismay arrives! "Seek the Lord, seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

Ver. 14. *Theme:* THE PRAYER OF MEDIATION SILENCED BY GOD.

For there is a climax of iniquity

which renders pity misplaced, and prayer a mockery; these must not then intervene. (See on chap. vii. 16.) Praying men are arrested in their very prayers by the dreadful fact that the guilty scorn to pray for themselves until doom is upon them.

I. A bound is here set to prayer; because there is a bound to possibility.

II. A warning is here given to the prayerless: they must not reckon on the successful prayers of others for them so long as they refuse to pray for themselves.

III. A correction is here suggested to the prayerful: when God's purposes are evidently fixed, do not attempt to interpose; nor, when you have prayed unwisely, and He therefore does not answer, conclude that He is *not* the Hearer of prayer. There is a time for solemn silence and submission. (See on chap. vii. 16.)

Ver. 15. *Theme:* THE UNWELCOME SACRIFICE. (Addenda on verse.)

I. Offered by one whom God held dear: "my beloved." For God tenderly cherishes even His sinning people.

II. Presented amid solemn surroundings: "in Mine house." The scene was good, where God was ready to meet the worshipper, and where sacrifices were pleasant to Him.

III. Itself a proper and approved offering to God: "holy flesh." Beautiful and holy things God desires from us.

IV. Rendered abhorrent by the worshipper's guilt: "she hath wrought lewdness;" and "when doing evil, exulted." God can have no pleasure in pure things offered with defiled hands. "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings," &c. (Isa. i. 11–16). (See *Lit. Crit.* on verse.)

Ver. 16, 17. *Theme:* DESTRUCTION OF THE FAIR OLIVE-TREE.

A favourite and frequent figure for God's ancient people. Observe: 1. *How carefully Jehovah cherishes the remembrance* of our early fidelity and spiritual beauty: He had not lost the vision of Judah's former piety. 2. *How clearly God delineates the mournful difference;* fully recognises the degeneracy and decay of that early goodliness. He is watchful over our careers, and notes our present state as compared or contrasted with our former years.

I. The beautiful tree of God's fostering.

1. *Its fair proportions were God's own work.* To His grace Judah owed all her beauty. "The Lord called thy name, A green olive," &c. (ver. 16), *i.e.*, He made her what she was.

2. *Its localisation in fruitful soil was an act of Divine planting.* "The Lord planted thee" (ver. 17). Observe: To God's grace, which made us what we are, we must trace all our spiritual advantages: He hath wrought all our works in us.

II. Goodly fruit grossly misused. All that this fair tree yielded was carried away from Him who planted it, and offered to Baal (ver. 17). 1. He who planted the tree should gather the fruit; an *unnatural alienation* of human life. 2. A tree whose fruits are deteriorated must be removed: evil growths must not remain in God's fair garden. *Wickedness forfeits privileges.* "*Pronounced evil* against thee, for the *evil done*" (ver. 17).

III. Destruction by fire of the degenerate tree.

1. *Calamity threatened:* "The Lord hath pronounced evil." 2. *Complete devastation effected:* "with the noise of a great tumult," &c. (ver. 16), *i.e.*, by the fury of a thunderstorm and the fiery lightning, by which "fire is kindled upon it, and the branches are broken."

Ver. 17. *Theme:* THE SINNER'S SIN HURTS HIMSELF. *Text:* "*The evil which they have done against themselves.*"

i. *Intentionally* against God: "To provoke Me to anger."

ii. *Practically* to their own injury. Guilt rebound, returns upon the guilty. (See Outlines on chap. vii. 19.)

Ver. 18–23. *Theme:* PERSECUTION OF GOD'S PROPHET. (See Homily on section, *supra*. Addenda on ver. 19, "*Murderers in ambush.*")

i. *Secret counsels revealed by Jehovah*

(ver. 19). The general "conspiracy" (see ver. 9) of the nation against Jehovah was accompanied by a family conspiracy against Jeremiah, his own brethren being determined to take his life. This cruel plot was revealed to His unsuspecting servant by God Himself.

"Although the human heart cannot be fathomed (chap. xvii. 9), yet nothing can be hidden from God, and He frequently reveals hidden counsels, so that they are known and manifest, as in the case of Absalom and Ahithophel (Isa. viii. 10). Therefore do nothing in secret, in the hope that it will remain hidden, for the birds of the heaven carry the voice, and the winged repeat it. (Eccles. x. 20)."—*Cramer.*

ii. *Cruel treachery against a harmless prophet* (ver. 19). It was not that Jeremiah wronged them, but the truth troubled them. Criminals are wroth against their captors. So Ahab against Elijah (1 Kings xviii). Note: how *defenceless* the godly leave themselves: "as a lamb," with no protection against guile or malevolence; even as Christ Himself: "As a Lamb before His shearers." God keeps His own while they serve His will. Mark, also, how *typical* was Jeremiah's case: "like a lamb brought to the slaughter;" not violent, as angry men are wont to be, but gentle and submissive, free from vindictiveness; and also fulfilling his work at the peril (in Christ's case, at the expense) of his life.

"*Let us destroy the tree with the fruit;*" that is, the man, who is the tree, and his teaching, which is the fruit; thus ridding ourselves at once of both causes of disturbance, the living presence of this witness against our sins, and his incisive words of condemnation and reproach.

"*Let us cut him off from the land of the living.*" *Wordsworth* remarks, "So of Christ it is said by Isaiah (liii. 8). All that happened to the prophet Jeremiah, who was specially the suffering prophet, was a foreshadowing of what would happen to the Great Prophet of whom Moses spoke, 'the Man of Sorrows;' and we read these narratives concerning Jeremiah with comparatively little advantage unless we see here a prophetic adumbration of Christ." *Jerome* says, "Almost all things that the prophets did and suffered were figurative of Christ; and whatever was fulfilled in Jeremiah was a prophecy concerning the Lord Himself.

iii. *Vengeance imprecated on foes* (ver. 20). This wish for vengeance was not personal, but ministerial; not because of wrong done him, but because they were the determined and unscrupulous adversaries of God and His word. The noteable difference between this appeal to God against His foes and Christ's prayer for those who crucified Him, "Father, forgive them," and Stephen's "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," marks the wide distinction between the old and new covenants; the former was grounded on *righteousness*, the latter on *love*. *Zinzendorf* remarks, "The first New Testament vengeance was executed on the Cross, when an evil-doer, who had mocked at Jesus, cringed on the cross and asked for a gracious remembrance." *Wordsworth:* "Jeremiah, the human type, *fails* in some things where Christ, the Divine Antitype, *excels*."

"*Unto Thee have I revealed my cause.*" A teacher is advised to say this if he can, "I have ceased to concern myself about myself." Luther says:—

> "Once I grasped too many things;—
> None stayed; they all had wings.
> But since I've weary grown,
> And all away have thrown,
> Not one from me has flown.
> And do you ask, How can it be thus?
> Because I've cast my all on Jesus."

Messengers and servants who concern themselves about their own injuries must have bad masters.—*Zinzendorf.*

iv. *The implacable malice of familiars* (ver. 21). "Where shall a man find worse friends than at home? A prophet is nowhere so little set by as in his own country (Matt. xiii. 57)."—*Trapp.* None were so bitter to Christ as His fellow-townsmen (Luke iv. 24–29). "That which the people of Anathoth say here to Jeremiah, the people of this world say everywhere and at all times

to the preachers of the truth. (Comp. 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.) It is important, then, to preach the word; to be instant in season and out of season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."—*Naeg. in Lange.* "It appears from this passage that the holy man had not only to contend with the king and his courtiers, and the priests who were at Jerusalem, but that when he betook himself to a corner to live quietly with his own people, he had even there no friend, but that all persecuted him as an enemy."—*Calvin.*

v. *God's visitation on His people's foes* (ver. 22, 23). *Henry* comments thus: "The sentence passed upon them for their crime. God says, *I will punish them;* let Me alone to deal with them. *I will visit this upon them:* so the word is: will inquire into it and reckon for it. . . . They sought Jeremiah's life, therefore *they shall die.* They would destroy him, that *his name be no more remembered;* therefore shall there be *no remnant of them.* And herein the Lord is righteous." *Cramer:* "When the people will not endure the rod of Christ's mouth, with which He smites the earth (Isa. xi. 4), *item,* His rods Beauty and Bands (Zech. xi. 7), God sends one with the sword to preach, and then we see what the smooth preachers have effected (Isa. xxx. 10)."

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER XI.

Topic: JOSIAH'S DISCOVERY OF THE LAW. *Text:* "*Hear ye the words of this covenant*" (ver. 2).

Josiah, the last sovereign of David's house (for his sons had not independent rule), showed the zeal and prompt obedience of the son of Jesse. Character: "heart was tender" (2 Kings xxii. 19). Discovery of Moses's law the great event of his reign. 1. It shows that the *Holy Scripture had for a long time been neglected,* and was practically lost. This Book of the Law was the five "books of Moses," containing the original covenant between God and His people. Moses had enforced the domestic study of these Scriptures (Deut. xi. 18–20), enjoined upon each king that they be constantly read and recited (xvii. 19, 20), ordered that at feast of tabernacles they be publicly read to the whole nation (xxxi. 7–13). 2. The loss of the book and this negligence of God's word *resulted from the diversities and depths of national apostasy.* The nation did not want to hear the law which testified against their multiplied transgressions, nor to listen to a condemnation of the idols they had chosen. Nor would the kings copy out the law for themselves when finding that it was against the will of God that the nation should have a king.

I. **Josiah's evil parentage explains his total ignorance of the law.**

1. *His parental alienation from God and His word.* The last good king before him was Hezekiah, who had been dead sixty or seventy years. His son Manasseh, who succeeded him, was the most profane of all the line of David; he it was who committed the inexpiable sins which sealed the sentence of Judah's destruction. He had set up idols in the temple, made his sons pass through the fire, dealt with spirits and wizards, shed much innocent blood in Jerusalem, done wickedly above all before him. On his return from Babylonian captivity, Manasseh attempted reformation, but found it easier to seduce than to reclaim the people (2 Chron. xxxiii. 15–25). Amon, who succeeded him, followed during his short reign the first ways of his father, and "trespassed more and more," till slain by his subjects. Josiah was the son of this wicked king.

2. *His own irreligious education.* Brought up among very wicked men, in a corrupt court, after an apostasy of more than half a century, far from God's prophets, in the midst of idols.

II. **Religion is not determined wholly by outward circumstances.** Like Manasseh, Josiah came to the throne in his boyhood. But Manasseh was the son of pious Hezekiah; Josiah, the son of wicked Amon. Thus religious life is not

dependent on parentage, but, under God, who gives grace, on the state of the heart.

1. *His early life of piety.* Boyhood is not revealed to us, except that he came to the throne when only eight. But scarcely was he old enough to think for himself and profess himself a servant of the true God, ere he chose that good part which could not be taken from him. When but sixteen he began to seek after the God of David his father (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3). Blessed they who so seek, for they shall find.

2. *His disadvantages.* He had not the aid of the revealed volume; was surrounded by diversities of idol-worship, sophistries of unbelief, seductions of sinful pleasure. Every temptation to go wrong. Had he gone into a life of sin, we might have made allowance; not so bad as other kings, for he had not sinned against light, as they had done. Yet he had enough light to show him how to go right; if, therefore, he had gone wrong, he would have sinned against *what light he had;* not light so clear as Solomon or Joash had, yet still against his better knowledge.

III. Every one has knowledge enough to be religious. Even the most unfavoured, poorest, and most ignorant. Education does not make a man religious; nor is it an excuse for irreligion that he has not been educated to his duty. It only makes him less guilty than those taught; but still he is guilty.

1. *Scarcely any one in a Christian land can be in more disadvantageous circumstances* than Josiah; nay, scarcely in a heathen country; for idolatry was around him, and his mind was unformed.

2. But he had that, which all men have, *a natural sense of right and wrong;* and he did not blunt it. He heard and obeyed a constraining Divine voice. Though all the world had told him other, he would not believe he could sin without offence or with impunity.

3. The same inward sense *led him to choose,* amid all the various worships offered to his acceptance, *the true one*—the worship of the God of Israel (Ps. cxi. 10, cxix. 100.

4. *His religious life was spontaneous.* At sixteen he began to seek the God of his fathers; at twenty commenced his reformation—began of himself. Jeremiah did not begin to prophecy till after Josiah commenced his work. So that the king set about his pious task unaided by others.

IV. Thus following the biddings of his natural conscience, God gave him clear light. He set out in his work of reformation not knowing whither he went. But it is a rule of God's providence, that those who act up to their light shall have clearer. "To him that hath shall be given." While engaged in his work of restoring the temple, the Book of the Law was found.

1. *His character here reveals itself in his conduct.* Not inflated; as some who, though beginning humbly, become self-confident and proud. He still had "a heart tender, and humbled himself before God." Felt his own blindness and weakness, and earnestly sought to know his duty better and practise it more entirely. "Rent his clothes" (2 Kings xxii. 11), for he saw how incomplete his reformation had been, how far more guilty the nation was than he had supposed, and the fearful punishments overhanging them (Deut. xxx. 15, 19, xi. 26–28). And there had been in part a fulfilment of those threats. Samaria, the ten revolting tribes, Israel, had been carried away. Though he knew their sins had wrought this, yet here he finds it *threatened beforehand,* and discovered that the same punishment awaited his own people should they persist in sin.

2. *He sought guidance of a Divine teacher.* Sent to Huldah for counsel (2 Chron. xxxiv. 21, &c.).

V. His zealous and solicitous course of action in consequence of the Divine message. Assembled all Judah at Jerusalem, publicly read the Book of Law, then made all the people renew the covenant with the God of their fathers. Then, more

exactly following the directions of the Lord, he carried on further reformations, and after that celebrated the Passover.

1. *Greater knowledge was followed by stricter obedience* (2 Kings xxiii. 22).

2. *What he did he did with all his might* (ibid. ver. 25).

Conclusion:

(*a.*) *Observance of God's will, however we learn it, ensures God's favour.* Learning it from His Word in Scripture, as Christians do, or from His Word in our consciences, as the heathen do; it is by following it, in spite of seductions of the world around us, that we please God (Acts x. 25).

(*b.*) If such is God's mercy on all men who seek Him, *what will be His grace to Christians?* Far greater and more wonderful. Elected out of the world in Jesus Christ our Saviour to a glory incomprehensible and eternal.—*Abridged and arranged from "Plain Sermons," by authors of "Tracts for the Times."*

Topic: SINS OF OMISSION. *Text:* "*Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear*" (ver. 8).

God commisioned Jeremiah to bring solemn accusation against Judah; he gives the first place to their shortcomings in positive service, reminds them of what they had not done, but ought to have done—constantly and persistently refused active obedience to the righteous will of the Most High.

I. The great commonness of sins of omission: in the *world*, in our circle of *society*, in our *own hearts*.

1. In a certain sense *all offences against the law of God* come under the head of sins of omission. Every sin is a breach of the all-comprehensive law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." How multitudinous our omissions in respect to this command of Christ! Too often we have had other gods beside Him. He deserved, having bought us with the blood of His dear Son, to be served with all-consuming earnestness. He rightly claims our best thoughts and utmost love; yet "unprofitable servants." So too in regard to our "neighbour." What sins of omission daily occur in our various relationships—our neighbours, our children, our household.

2. Sins of omission are seen in all who *neglect to perform the first and all-essential Gospel command:* "Repent and be converted;" "Repent and be baptised;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Yet, though urged to repentance and to faith in Christ, sin is not sorrowed for, faith in Christ not exercised. This true of dense masses everywhere, and of many in God's house who hear but not obey.

3. Sins of omission in *religious duties.* Multitudes neglect the outward worship of God. But others show religious regard; yet what omissions as to *prayer;* how lax in devotion are the most of us! As to the *Bible:* left unread! As to *service:* talents wrapped up in napkin! Our omissions lie upon the horizon of memory like masses *of storm-clouds accumulating for a horrible tempest.*

II. The cause of this excessive multiplicity of sins of omission.

1. The great cause lies in *our evil hearts.* Absence of clean heart and right spirit is at the root: "Ye must be born again."

2. *The conscience of man is not well alive* to sins of omission. While conscience will chastise men for direct acts of wrong, not awake to sins of neglect.

3. These sins are multiplied *through indolence.* Men sleep on, awake not to righteousness and the service of God. In the face of eternity, life, death, heaven, and hell, multitudes are simply ruined because they neglect the great salvation, and are absolutely too idle to concern themselves.

4. *Ignorance.* With many ignorance is wilful; have Bible, conscience; yet sin against light and knowledge.

5. *Men excuse themselves so readily* about these sins of omission. A more convenient season is anticipated for repentance, faith, prayer. This postponement of service is the perpetuation of rebellion.

6. Many neglect because of *the prevalence of the like conduct.* To omit to love and serve the Lord is the custom. But enlightened conscience warns us that custom is no excuse for sin: it will be no plea at the bar of God.

III. The sinfulness of sins of omission. They cannot be trivial, for

1. Consider what would be the consequences if *God were to omit* His mercies to us for one moment! Suppose He should omit to supply breath or life for one minute, or omit to restrain the axe of judgment for an hour! Suppose for a day He should omit His natural blessings to the world; the sun would forbear to shine, life would forget to be, world perish. Suppose Jesus had left an omission in His plan of salvation; the whole would have failed, and humanity left without remedy or hope.

2. Reflect what an *influence they would have upon an ordinary commonwealth.* If one person has a right to omit his duty, another has, and all have—watchman, judge, merchant, husbandman; society soon collapse, kingdom break to pieces.

3. Think how you would judge of *omissions towards yourselves.* In the case of your servant, you instantly resent it. So in a soldier. Even in your child: to neglect your command is regarded as equally criminal as to commit offence. Perhaps you have given God all except loving Him; outward worship and profession, but not love. Consider this to be the case in your home, in your wife: omission of love is a fatal lack, and so is your love of God.

4. Consider *what God thinks of omissions.* Saul was ordered to kill the Amalekites—not one to escape: he saved Agag and best of the cattle; therefore the Lord said, "I have put thee away from being king over Israel!" Ahab was commanded to kill Benhadad on account of great criminality: Ahab only captured him; therefore, "Because thou hast let this man go, thy life shall be for his life!" Our Lord *cursed* the fig-tree because no fruit! The man with one talent was condemned because he neglected to use it. The Holy Spirit convinces of sins of omission,—"of sin, because they believe not on Me."

IV. The result and punishment of sins of omission.

1. *They will condemn us.* "The king shall say, I was hungered and ye gave me no meat," &c. The absence of virtue rather than the presence of vice condemned them. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Though we know nothing of salvation by works, yet the Baptist's words echo loud, "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

2. If persevered in, they will *effectually shut against us the possibilities of pardon.* "He that believeth *not*"—is there pardon, rescue for him? No; he "is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Will the mercy of God blot out sins unrepented of? Nay; sins will cling to us as the leprosy to the house of Gehazi. In the marriage feast in Gospel, many would not come, and they perished because they would not come; and one came but "had not on the wedding-garment," and because of that omission, "Bind him hand and foot, and deliver him to the tormentors." So if you have not—mark that point—put on the righteousness of Christ by a living faith in Him, salvation will be forfeit for ever.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XI. ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 2. **The lost book of the covenant found.** "The Temple during the previous reign had fallen into a state of neglect, such that, as in the time of Joash, a complete restoration had become necessary. On this occasion, however, the king and the priesthood acted in entire harmony. Suddenly, under the accumulated rubbish or ruins of the Temple (as it would seem), the High Priest discovered a roll containing the 'Book of the Law.'

Whatever may have been the exact nature of this document, two points,

and two alone, are clear. First, it was as complete a surprise as if the book had never been known before. During the troubles of the reign of Manasseh there is no proof of its destruction, while during the previous reigns there is no proof of its existence. David, Solomon, Asa, and Jehoshaphat had lived in constant, and apparently unconscious, violation of the ordinances which came home with such force to Josiah. It is possible that the book may have now been first composed. It is possible that it may have been a mere rediscovery. . . . But, in either case, this sudden appearance of the law amounted almost to a new revelation.

"Secondly, whatever other portions of the Pentateuch may have been included in the roll, there can be little doubt that the remarkable work to which the Greek translators gave the name of 'the Second Law '(Deuteronomy)occupied the chief place."—*Stanley's "Jewish Church."*

Ver. 4. **The covenant an alliance of love.** "So shall ye be My people," &c. "Now, for the first time, the love of God, as the chief ground of His dealings with His people—the love towards God as the ground of their service to Him—the spiritual character and free choice of that service (Deut. vi. 4–9, vii. 6–11, &c.), were urged on the nation with all the force of Divine and human authority."—*Stanley, ibid.*

Ver. 6. **Jehovah's message widely published.** "Proclaim all these words."

"I say to thee, Do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet,
In lane, highway, or open street,

That he and we and all men move
Under a canopy of love,
As broad as the blue sky above.

. . . . . .

And ere thou leave him, say thou this
Yet one word more: They only miss
The winning of that final bliss

Who will not count it true that Love,
Blessing, not cursing, rules above,
And that in it we live and move.

And one thing further make him know:
That, to believe these things are so,
This firm faith never to forego,

Despite of all that seems at strife
With blessing—all with curses rife;—
That *this* is blessing, *this* is life."

R. C. TRENCH.

Ver. 7. "*Rising early and protesting;*" as Plutarch reporteth of the Persian kings, that they had an officer to call them up betimes, and to mind them of their business.—*Trapp.* Yet God rose unsolicited, so eager and earnest was He on His people's behalf.

Ver. 9. **Conspiracy against God.** Did you ever, on a hot afternoon, witness the contest of innumerable worms over a carrion carcass? Did you ever notice the greediness, selfishness, and quarrelsomeness displayed by the actors in a scene like that? And yet such a contest is decent compared with the gigantic contest that has been carried on for thousands of years by the vermicular human race; and God has looked upon it, pondered over it, and carried it in His heart; and all this time He has not ceased to pour out upon the world, in rich abundance, the blessings of His never-failing love.—*Beecher.*

Ver. 15. **The unwelcome sacrifice.** He that offers in sacrifice, O Pamphilus! a multitude of bulls and of goats, of golden vestments or purple garments, of figures of ivory or precious gems, and imagines by this to conciliate the favour of God, is grossly mistaken, and has no solid understanding; for he that would sacrifice with success ought to be chaste and charitable, no corrupter of virgins, no adulterer, no robber or murderer for the sake of lucre. God, who is near thee, perpetually beholds thy actions.—*From the Greek.*

Ver. 19. **Murderers in ambush.** Between the priesthood and the prophets there had hitherto been more or less of a conflict; but now that conflict was exchanged for a fatal union. "A wonderful and horrible thing was committed in the land: the prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bore rule by their means;" and he (Jeremiah) who by each of his callings [Stanley regards Jeremiah as having been a priest before he was called to become a prophet] was naturally led to sympathise with both, was the doomed antagonist of both—victim of one of the strongest passions, the hatred of priests against a priest who attacks his own order,—the hatred of prophets against a prophet who ven-

tures to have a voice and a will of his own. His own village of Anathoth, occupied by members of the sacred tribe, was for him a nest of conspirators against his life. Of him first in the sacred history was the saying literally fulfilled, "A prophet hath no honour in his own birthplace" (Ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ τατρίδι, Luke iv. 24).—*Stanley.*

CHAPTER XII.

Critical and Exegetical Notes.—1. **Chronology of the chapter.** See on chap. xi., Bleek's theory; for which there is a weight of argument. All commentators agree to connect vers. 1–6 with the conclusion of the previous chapter. The following vers. 7–17, fall into two strophes, 7–13, and 14–17. Hitzig and Graf regard vers. 7–13 as a lament over Judah's devastation consequent upon Jehoiakim's defection from Nebuchadnezzar in the eighth year of his reign. And Eichhorn, Dahler, and others hold section 14–17 to be a distinct oracle, belonging to the time of Zedekiah, or to the seventh or eighth year of Jehoiakim (*cf.* Keil). The "evil neighbours" mentioned in ver. 14 are taken by many to be hordes of Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites, Idumeans, and Philistines, by which the land was overrun, and who, in their alliance to Chaldean supremacy, undertook a war of spoliation against insurgent Judah in eighth year of Jehoiakim. Dr. Payne Smith and Keil preserve the chronological unity of the entire chapter, and contend that ver. 7–17 contain Jehovah's answer to Jeremiah's complaint, 1–6. 2. *Cotemporary Scriptures.* 3. *National Affairs.* 4. *Cotemporary History:* as in notes on chap. xi. See above, on "evil neighbours."

5. **Geographical References.**—Ver. 5. "*Swelling of Jordan:*" lit. the *pride of Jordan.* Ewald, Umbreit, and A.V. interpret it as the rise and overflow of the river; but Keil, Payne Smith, and Hend. as "the luxuriant thickets along its banks." The river did overflow its lower banks in April and May, and fill the Ghor valley: this resulted from the melting of the winter's snow on Hermon and Lebanon. The expression is not inappropriate to such an inundation (*cf.* Job xxxviii. 11); but, as nothing is known of dangerous overflows of the river, the comparison of the text, implying serious peril, is void of force or significance. On the other hand, taking the reference to the marshy banks, overgrown with shrubs, trees, and reeds, which were the natural haunts of lions, the comparison is most striking. Just as in the reedy thickets of the Euphrates lions hid themselves, so in the rank vegetation which abounded on the banks of Jordan, especially between the Sea of Tiberias and the Lake Merom, affording shelter for wild boars, tigers, bears, and lions. *Maundrell* says the banks are in some parts so wooded that the traveller cannot see the river at all until he has fought his way through the tangled and lofty growths. How would the prophet do in the wooded haunts of wild beasts? Ver. 14. "*Evil neighbours:*" in 2 Kings xxiv. 2, are mentioned the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites; and in Ps. cxxxvii. the Edomites also. The Idumeans and Philistines likewise joined themselves to the Chaldean power; and all these nations, being in the vicinity of the Jews, made use of their opportunity for molesting Judah.

6. **Natural History.**—Ver. 9. "*Speckled bird:*" the interpretation of עַיִט צָבוּעַ is disputed. Gesenius and the LXX. render it *hyæna;* thus "a ravenous beast, the hyæna." But עַיִט always elsewhere means bird of prey (*cf.* Isa. xlvi. 11, xviii. 6, &c.). The word צָבוּעַ as an adjective is naturally derived from צָבַע, to *tinge or dye.* By this parti-coloured or speckled bird is probably meant a vulture. It is a familiar fact in natural history that birds, and especially birds of prey, will unite in attacking an intruder whose appearance is distinctive and peculiar. But birds of prey are not known thus to attack hyænas. Ver. 12. "*High places through the wilderness*" (see notes on chap. iii. 2), *i.e.*, "the bare-topped hills of the desert." מִדְבָּר, is the name for such parts of the country as were suited only for rearing and pasturing cattle, like the so-called wilderness of Judah to the west of the Dead Sea" (Keil).

7. **Literary Criticisms.**—Ver. 1. "*Let me talk with Thee of judgments:*" rather, Yet will I speak with Thee on a matter of right.—(*Speaker's Com.*). "*Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously!*" Rather, *secure,* tranquil, at ease; who "deal faithlessly" (Keil); "practise knavery" (Lange); "prevaricate prevarications" (Septuagint)—which is truer to the Heb. בְּגֹד בָּגְדוּ. Ver. 3. "*Pull them out like sheep.*" נָתַק, to *tear,* pull away with violence: although, in Judges xx. 32, the gentler significance of *to draw* or *lead* is given. Properly the word implies force and violence. Ver. 4. "*He shall not see our last end:*" the LXX. refer the seeing to God, thus: οὐκ ὄψεται ὁ Θεὸς ὁδοὺς ἡμῶν; and Rosen., Ewald, and others interpret the meaning as, God will pay no heed to our fate, so that we may act as we choose unpunished! Graf refers "he shall not see" to Jeremiah; because "they" (*the wicked,* ver. 1) intended to destroy him (Hitzig); or because his threatenings against us will not come to pass (Keil). Henderson takes the word as *impersonal,* and renders them, "no one shall see our

end;" *i.e.*, it shall not be realised, we shall not be destroyed. Ver. 5. "*Contend* with horses;" from the root חָרָה, *to burn;* Hith., *to be eager, be hot.* The *Vulgate* has given "contend." Ver. 6. "They have *called a multitude after thee:*" מָלֵא (here rendered "*multitude*") has been given as "in a troop," "in a mass," "with a full voice:" the last is most correct (as in ch. iv. 5; see notes); *loudly*, lustily, vehemently: as being an adverb. "*After thee:*" *i.e.*, behind thee. The sentence suggests that they would follow the prophet with a clamorous hue and cry. Ver. 9. "*Come to devour:*" *i.e.*, Cause them to come, bring them. Ver. 11. "*They have made it desolate:*" the Heb. word is impersonal: *One has set it for a desolation;* or *set it* is *an utter desolation.* Ver. 14. "That *touch the inheritance:*" נָגַע, to touch an enemy, to attack (*cf.* Zech. ii. 12). "*I will pluck them out, . . . and pluck out the house of Judah:*" a promise of two removals; the heathen from the land of Canaan, and the Jews from the land of the heathen.

HOMILIES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XII.

Section 1–6. Complaint that treachery prospers; admonitory warnings given.
„ 7–13. God's faithless people abandoned to desolation.
„ 14–17. Penalty for oppressors, mercy for penitents.

Ver. 1–6. Complaint that Treachery prospers; Admonitory Warnings given.

Affairs seemed to Jeremiah all discordant with God's righteousness: he must plead with Him respecting them. He speaks to God humbly yet honestly about the difficulty he finds in interpreting God's ways with men; letting the treacherous prosper, allowing the godly to suffer. Learn how to go "*boldly* to the throne of grace:" take all burdens, and open all our thoughts fully to God: "casting all our cares upon Him."

I. A bewildered soul making complaint of wrong. For it seemed wrong to the prophet. 1. *Impiety enjoyed every luxury and advantage:* "the wicked prosper;" the treacherous are "happy" or at ease (ver. 1). 2. *God Himself appeared to favour them.* That was the blinding mystery: "*Thou* hast planted them;" and they continue to "grow" and "bring forth fruit" (ver. 2), as if God would allow nothing to harm them. It would have been different had there been no God to execute justice and judgment in the earth. 3. *Hypocrisy was employed as a disguise.* God was "near in their mouth, but far from their reins;" yet surely the All-seeing One could detect the blasphemous fraud; He would not be deceived, and reward this religious pretence with prosperity as if it were sincere! 4. *Godliness seemed left unvindicated.* Jeremiah could not attempt to exalt his own loyalty to God and love of truth against this prevalent hypocrisy; yet "Thou, O Lord, knowest me," &c. (ver. 3.) Nevertheless, while God appeared to favour the wicked, he, His servant, was left to suffer! 5. *Indignation against transgressors utters itself.* "Pull them out like sheep," &c. (ver. 3): the prophet's incensed soul rises into impatience, he adventures to appeal to Jehovah as to what should be done to them. This seems daring, but observe that: 6. *Holy patriotism impelled his remonstrance with God.* "How long shall the land mourn?" &c. (ver. 4): the "wickedness" of these men was working havoc and ruin on his loved country; and while they revelled in iniquity they arrogated to themselves safety—"He shall not see our last end" (see Literary Criticism on words). All this "vexed his righteous soul."

II. A wearied sufferer admonished of heavier trials. No word of comfort or explanation from God in return to this complaint: only prophecy of greater ills. It indicates: 1. *That evil must be allowed to reach maturity ere God will interpose.* These men would go on "from iniquity unto iniquity." They may enjoy immunity for awhile, but their measure is being filled up. Malignity against God's prophet was reaching more and more to the very heart of the nation (ver. 6): then no word from God through him would receive the faintest regard; not a willing listener would be left. God held back the vindication of His prophet and His own righteousness, till the last hour of hope had been abused.

2. *God's witnesses must not expect immunity from hardships.* Fidelity entails hostility. In every calling it is so. The more virulent the evil around, the more fidelity is needed, yet the more will the faithful have to endure. Jeremiah's trials would enlarge (ver. 5), for the people's wickedness was becoming more daring (ver. 6). We must expect the penalties of godliness, must not shrink from ordeals. "Endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

3. *Darker days are foretold so that preparation may be sought.* That is the lesson of verse 5. The evils from which you suffer, and of which you now complain, will grow more appalling: "how wilt thou do?" Is there in you a timid heart, a shrinking from the stern experiences incident to your holy work? More need of grasping God firmly, trusting Him implicitly, leaving all issues with Him, and drawing from Him "strength to be made perfect in your weakness." "We may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Ver. 7–13. God's Faithless People Abandoned to Desolation.

Note here, that Jeremiah had complained to God of having suffered from the hostility of his people and even his own family: now, in turn, Jehovah tells His prophet that the nation had turned upon *Him* with an appalling malignity, as a "lion roaring against Him" (ver. 8). God had suffered more griefs and wrongs from His people than had Jeremiah. The enmity showed by his "house" (ver. 6) to Jeremiah was only a symbol of the enmity of God's "house" (ver. 7) to Him. The sore penalty is, "I have given over the dearly beloved of my soul to her enemies."

I. The downfall of the nation was occasioned by no want of love on God's part for Judah. He may cherish a people still, may "love the world," may yearn towards the sinner, and yet God's love may not avail to shield the wicked from the consequences of guilt. Right cannot abdicate even to Love.

II. The abandonment of Judah to her foes was necessitated by her having become herself God's foe. Though He loved her, she set herself against Him as a roaring lion (ver. 8). One whom God loves may therefore unite with God's enemies: 1. *In the attitude of defiance;* 2. *In the experience of God's displeasure* (ver. 8).

III. The penalties of Divine abandonment are utterly desolating. As God's favour is life, so is His hatred death: Jerusalem's punishment must be severe as if inflicted by one who held her in abhorrence. 1. Having ranked herself with God's foes, she *is given over to her enemies* (ver. 7, 9). 2. Having repudiated God's minister (Jeremiah), *alien "pastors" are called upon the sacred land* (ver. 10). 3. *Desolation without pity* (ver. 11), and *devastation without restraint* (ver. 12), would ensue. 5. "The fierce anger of the Lord" would *reduce the people to dismay and shame:* their crops a failure; their defences against a siege, which had cost them "pain" to contrive, would prove profitless; and their "revenues" in which they relied would purchase them no protection from the devouring "sword of the Lord."

Ver. 14–17. Penalty for Oppressors, Mercy for Penitents.

"The spoilers of the Lord's heritage are also to be carried off out of their land: but after they, like Judah, have been punished, the Lord will have pity on them, and will bring them back one and all into their own land. And if the heathen, who now seduce the people of God to idolatry, learn the ways of God's people and be converted to the Lord, they shall receive citizenship amongst God's people, and be built up amongst them; but if they will not do so, they shall be extirpated.

Thus will the Lord manifest Himself before the whole earth as righteous Judge, and through judgment secure the weal not only of Israel, but of the heathen peoples too."—*Keil.*

Here is a message of mercy blended with judgment to the nations bordering upon the land of Judah, who had been, or would be, injurious to the peace of God's people. Obs.

I. To touch with unhallowed hand the heritage of God's people is criminal (ver. 14). 1. The godly are often closely pressed by ungodly neighbours. 2. God permits those whom we copy in wrong-doing to become our oppressors. 3. Yet He watches jealously over the possessions as well as the persons of His people. 4. And will hold them guilty of sacrilege who touch Israel's inheritance. 5. Their oppression shall return in kind upon themselves: "I will pluck *them* out of *their* land."

II. The compassion of Jehovah embraces peoples outside of His covenant (ver. 15). God has uncovenanted mercies to bestow, even on such as (1) had wronged His people—compare Saul of Tarsus; (2) had incurred Israel's hate, as these "evil neighbours" did: yet God is not implacable even to the enemies of His people (Col. i. 21). 1. God's judgments are ever tempered and followed by compassion. 2. His graciousness to wrong-doers designs to restore to them all which their sinfulness forfeited. 3. The godly should cherish a comprehensive charity as wide as God's compassion.

III. Preparation for the experience of Divine mercy is essential. 1. God discriminates and selects the objects of His compassion: not extended to all regardless of their state and conduct. 2. The sinner must make earnest efforts if he would avert judgment and inherit the mercy (ver. 16). 3. With what sacred favours God crowns the life that allies itself to Him: though "*not* of Israel," united to Israel, "built in the midst of My people." 4. But the rebellious shall receive judgment without alleviation (ver. 17). True equally for nations, families, individuals: grace is offered; abuse it, and only severity can ensue.

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: ITS BAFFLING ANOMALIES.

This is the objection which unbelievers urge against Providence in all ages, and the difficulty which the godly often feel. Since the Mosaic covenant recognised the administrations of righteousness *in this life*, many Old Testament saints stumbled before the mysteries (*cf.* Job xii. 6, xxi. 7; Psalms xxxvii. 1, 35, lxxiii. 3; Malachi iii. 15).

I. The broad operations of Divine righteousness trustfully acknowledged. "Righteous art Thou, O Lord." A firm conviction of the rectitude of God's character; ergo, of His proceedings, despite anomalies. It is well that we get on to this broad rock when perplexities, like riotous waves around, make us afraid, and the spray blinds our eyes. When hard thoughts of God's providence trouble us, rise up to this wide truth—*He is righteous.* To concentrate our thoughts on a narrow line of vision may mislead us: look over *the ages*, the *course of human history*, the *laws which assert themselves in man's experience*, the Divine rule *over the world*, the *vindication* of His righteousness *on Calvary*, the *witness of a righteous God in every conscience;* and this broad view compels the acknowledgment.

II. The particular administrations of Divine righteousness anxiously questioned. "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper," &c. The worldly comfort and success of these Anathoth conspirators seemed to confute God's righteousness. (See on *Section* of chapters, *supra.*) "It is a common grievance to live and experience that the ungodly are prosperous and the godly are unfortunate" (*Cramer*). "A difficulty to many wise and good men; they see the designs and projects of

wicked people successful, their affairs and concerns prosper. *Hypocrites* are chiefly meant (as appears, ver. 2), who dissemble in their good professions" (*Henry*). These "dealt treacherously" not only with God's servant, but with Jehovah Himself. Yet they were *prosperous* and *happy*. *E.g.*, *Dionysius* is reported to have said that God favoured the sacrilegious; for he had sailed in safety after having plundered temples and perpetrated robberies. Wrong-doers seem "in their lifetime to receive their good things." Sin looks the grand success.

III. A fuller acquaintance with the secrets of God's righteousness solemnly entreated. He would "plead with God and talk with Him of judgments;" *i.e.*, *reason the case*, inquire into the causes why the wicked are allowed to succeed, or ask for a *clearer vision of the hidden workings* of God's providence, to "see the end of the Lord." We have faulty sight; our gaze is clouded, partial, dim; we have limited sight; our eye does not travel far enough; we cannot see afar off along the years; we look at the near, at the present moment. Watch, wait: God is working out of our sight; His plans take in a longer time than our impatience reckons.

"Can we conceive anything more humane and gracious than our dear Lord? We know beforehand that we are wrong; we do not doubt that He does all well, yet it oppresses us. Straight to our Lord, the eternal and living God, with all our ill-humour, doubt, care, scruples! Pour out your heart before Him."—*Zinzendorf*.

God allows our expostulations, indeed, welcomes us to such pleading; and the soul who "talks with" God of the perplexities and difficulties which beset him, will find that "light is sown for the righteous," and that—

> "God is His own interpreter,
> And He will make it plain."

Ver. 3. *Theme:* A RIGHTEOUS SOUL PLEADING WITH THE RIGHTEOUS GOD.

I. Value of conscious integrity. It enables the soul to go before the Lord unabashed, boldly, with filial trust, assured of acceptance.

II. Appeal to Divine omniscience. The "pure in heart" shrink not from the searching light of God's eye. A joy to the sincere that the All-seeing knows his whole life and inmost thoughts.

III. Consolations of holy innocence. It flings off slander, is a shield from conspirators, sustains the soul in persecution, and gives inward comfort amid surrounding strife.

IV. Indignation against malevolent wrong-doers. They seemed to hinder and refute God's providential righteousness, and to cast discredit upon His wise and beneficent rule. Let them "reap what they have sown," and thus witness to God's antipathy towards sin and His friendship towards innocence. A sufferer at the hands of sinners can lawfully entertain such feelings; yet the Gospel attitude towards persecutors is—"Pray for (not against) them that despitefully use you," and leave God in His own way to vindicate His righteous providence, and show His approval of His loyal servants.

Ver. 4. *Theme:* DISASTERS CONSEQUENT UPON SIN.

"The land mourned," indicating general misery; probably a *drought* (see xiv. 2, &c.). The cause of this was "wickedness," *i.e.*, wrong-doing, oppression, rapine, violation of the rights of property and sanctities of home; criminal doings which carried dismay and sorrow everywhere. "The wicked were in great power."

I. What miseries sinners inflict on society. They can make a whole "land mourn." Think of the devastations wrought by habitual *intemperance*, reckless speculations in *commerce*, circulation of obscene *literature*, profanation of *religion*, virulent assaults on *faith*, allurements of *the young to evil courses of life*, &c. *Homes* are invaded with evils worse than bereavement; *society* is infested with moral plagues which destroy virtue and honour and reciprocal faith; *churches* are robbed of the hopeful seekers after God. Sinners are cruel destroyers; they ruin not themselves alone.

II. What outrages sinners commit against Divine law. "Wickedness" interrupts the beneficent action of the ordained laws of Heaven. Personal happiness and social prosperity are the natural issues of God's laws. "Wickedness" outrages those laws, works against them, breaks down the banks of flowing, fertilising rivers, and lets in a destructive inundation. Jeremiah recognised that this "wickedness" was an *offence to God*, as being a defiance of His kindly laws, as well as an outrage on society. Nations and societies and individuals secure their weal by respecting the right and obeying the will of God. Miseries—as now in Judah's experience—follow upon the violation of God's laws, which are ordained for human good.

III. What delusions sinners practise upon themselves. "They said, He shall not see our last end" (comp. *Lit. Crit.* on words). 1. *God* will not see, &c.: that affirms the theory that *Jehovah does not notice and punish human sin.* 2. *Jeremiah* will not see, &c.: *the prophet's threatenings are vapid and untrue;* punishment will not follow upon our wickedness. 3. *No one* shall see (impersonal): *our safety is in no wise imperilled by our sins;* man's conduct does not affect God, provokes no retributive Providence, nor influences human experience and destiny, so we need not be apprehensive of ill. And thus, in every age, self-beguiled sinners say, "Peace, peace, whereas sudden destruction cometh upon them."

Note, that there is a "*last end*" to the career of "wickedness."

Ver. 5. *Theme:* THE BACKWARD GLANCE OF SORROW, AND THE FORWARD GLANCE OF FEAR. "*If those hast run with the footmen and they wearied thee, how canst thou contend with horses? and if in land of peace, &c., how in swellings of Jordan?*"

A contrast instituted between a state of comparative quiet and peace and one of great commotion and trouble; and from the remembrance of the prophet's weariness amid auspicious circumstances, the inquiry arises as to results likely to follow when all is adverse and perilous. Applies to all who have *found themselves weak* in lesser trials, yet before whom rises the prospect of greater.

I. Sad recollections.

A review of the past with its humbling memories. 1. *Weariness was experienced when conflicting difficulties were insignificant.* Merely "running with *footmen*," with whom our own strength and perseverance might forsooth be matched. 2. *Weariness was felt when external circumstances were favourable.* "*In the land of peace* they wearied thee." Amid even life's comforts experienced "vexation of spirit." Even in youth "fainted and grew weary, and young men utterly fell."

II. Anxious forebodings.

A glance at the future with painful misgivings. 1. *Trials would be more overwhelming with circumstances less propitious.* "Horses;" "swellings of Jordan." Larger and more ominous. When storms lower, afflictions come, friends are gone, age upon us, death lays hand upon our heart, eternity looms before our gaze, with God and judgment-seat.—"*How wilt thou do?*"

2. *This severer ordeal may come at a time when least expected.* As came the inroads of the Chaldean army: cavalry "horses," the "swelling," or *pride*, perhaps the *lions* of Jordan. Heavy troubles, dreadful losses, desolating bereavements, the event of death—who can *anticipate* them?

III. Refuge desirable.

The need of a Helper suggested by the prospect. For the prophet would be unequal to the emergency. He would want God, His presence, succour, and hiding. So shall we, or *how shall we do?* Seek Him as

1. *A Refuge suited to every emergency;* whether "contending with horses," or "in the swellings of Jordan."

2. *A Refuge accessible in every extremity.*

Having Him, we can say: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, &c., can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Theme: THE SWELLINGS OF JORDAN.

Jeremiah had become impatient with his troubles. God says to him: "If you cannot stand these small trials and persecutions, what are you going to do when the greater come?" In a very practical way, ask

I. If it is such a difficult thing to get along without the religion of Jesus Christ when things are comparatively smooth, what shall we do amid the overpowering misfortunes and disasters of life that may come upon us?

If troubles, slow as footmen, surpass us, what do when they take the feet of horses? If now submerged with sorrows because we have not the religion of Jesus to comfort us, what do we when stand in death? A sad thing to see men, all unhelped by God, going out to fight the giants of trouble, no promise of mercy to soothe the soul, no rock of refuge in which to hide. How compete when the swift coursers of trouble come up for the race?

We have all yielded to *temptation*; been surprised afterwards that so small an inducement could have decoyed us from the right. But, if overthrown by small sins through lack of the religion of Jesus, how can we stand up against great ones?

II. The great tides of eternity will rise about us, and amid the swellings of Jordan we must all quit this life.

Our *natural courage* will not hold out then. The first dash of Jordan's waves will swamp all natural resources for ever. We feel how sad it is for a man to attempt this life without religion; but how will he feel when the shadows of the last hour gather about his pillow? If the religion of Christ is so important for us amid life's troubles and temptations, and in the hour of death, how much more important in the great eternity! *You will want Christ.* When the world is going away from your grasp, and all the lights that shine about you are going out, and friends around you can do you no good, and you feel your feet slipping from beneath you,—then you will want Jesus to stand close by you, and hold you up amid "the swellings of Jordan."—*De Witt Talmage.*

Theme: THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH.

One who had fought many battles, and seldom, if ever, lost any, was asked to what he attributed his remarkable success. He replied, "I owe it, under God, to this, that I made it a rule never to despise an enemy." To what warfare is this so applicable as to the Christian's? Those conflicts were best maintained which we counted most hazardous. Estimate your foes: "If run with footmen and wearied, *how contend with horses?*" The difficulty implied by this proverb appears in this—

I. That man is less a match for Satan now than when Satan, at their first encounter, proved himself more than a match for man.

Defeated in Eden, where can man now hope for success? Overcome in our state of innocence, what triumph can we effect in our state of guilt? None apart from Christ.

II. If we were overcome by sin ere it had grown into strength, we are now less able to resist it.

If we could not turn the stream near its mountain-cradle, how shall we turn the river that pours its flood into the sea? Sin gains power by time and habit. Some things weaken and wear away by use, but not the power of sin. All sinners, as well as "seducers, wax worse and worse." Overcome by sin when it was weak, how hope to resist it when strong? By *His grace* alone, with whom nothing is impossible: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Thus can "they that are accustomed to do evil learn to do well."

II. How these contending forces are to be overcome.

Renew the combat, never surrender: "Hope in God." Recall how Peter, "wearied by the footmen," nobly and successfully "contended with horses"—a coward before the maid in the judgment-hall, yet bold before the judges, declaring he would not keep silence, but would "obey God rather than man." God makes good His promises—"My grace is sufficient for thee;" "one man shall chase a thousand;" "he that is feeble among them shall be as David, and David shall be as God." With His

presence we may contend with greatest difficulties; and, clinging to Jesus, may go down undaunted even into "the swellings of Jordan."—*"Way to Life," Thomas Guthrie, DD.*

Note: "The argument is *a fortiori*. A proverbial phrase. The injuries done thee by the men of Anathoth ('footmen') are small compared with those which the men of Jerusalem ('horsemen') are about to inflict on thee. If the former 'weary thee' out, 'how wilt thou contend with' the king, the court, and the priests at Jerusalem? If in the campaign country alone thou art secure, how wilt thou do when thou fallest into the wooded haunts of wild beasts?"—*Critical Bible.*

i. While we are in this world we must expect troubles and difficulties.

ii. God's usual method being to begin with smaller trials, it is our wisdom to expect greater than any we have yet met with.

iii. It highly concerns us to prepare for such trials, and to consider what we should do in them.

iv. In order to our preparation for further and greater trials, we are concerned to approve ourselves well in present smaller trials, to keep hold on the promise, keep in our way, and, with our eye on the prize, so run that we may obtain.—*Henry.*

Ver. 6. *Theme:* TREACHERY CROUCHING BEHIND FAIR WORDS. In the perilous times nearing, Jeremiah's own relatives would raise the hue and cry after him, or seek by "fair words" to allure him from his mission.

I. Godliness may estrange family relationships. "Even thy brethren, &c., dealt treacherously."

II. Guilesome words will assay to decoy the faithful from his fidelity. "Speak fair words unto thee."

III. Insidious speech from the ungodly is not to be believed. It is like the serpent's voice to Eve. "Believe them not!"

IV. Refusal to heed guilesome words will provoke abusive raillery. "Cried loudly after thee." (See *Lit. Crit.* on words.)

V. Treachery will attack the godly from most covert scenes. In the very "house of thy father," and from thine own "brethren."

VI. Ceaseless watchfulness and unswerving constancy must be maintained. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Pause not to heed any "fair words," even when loved ones of the home softly and gently "speak" them: heed God alone. "He that loveth father, mother, brethren, &c., more than Me, is not worthy of Me." "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Note: *"Even thy brethren."* Abel was slain by his own brother; Paul suffered most from his own countrymen; Christ found no little depreciation at the hands of those near akin.

"They have called a multitude after thee." *Trapp* comments, "Or with full mouth—*Clamant post te pleno gutture*—as those did against Christ who cried, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him;' and those against Paul, 'Away with such fellows from the earth;' and those against the primitive Christians, '*Christianos ad leones.*' '*In Rhodanum, in Rhodanum,*' cried many at Geneva against Farellus, their faithful preacher, 'Into the river with him;' but God preserved him from their fury, for the good of many other cities after that converted by him.

Ver. 7. *Theme:* CHERISHED TREASURES CONSIGNED TO FOES.

God seems here to use most endearing terms in order to mark the dreadful desolation about to overtake Judah. This heartless people boasted in the thought that they were God's "heritage," His "dearly beloved;" yet, instead of valuing their high estate in grace, they *presumed upon it*, trifled with it, and even set themselves lion-like (ver. 8) against their benignant spiritual Benefactor. And their lofty distinction as a people, which should have prompted them to proportionate jealousy to remain *worthy of it* and act in harmony therewith, led to spiritual pride and national degeneracy. Observe:

I. How God lingers fondly over the objects of His gracious regard. As

if reluctant to think other than loving thoughts of them: enumerates all that was attractive, "house, heritage, beloved of My soul," as if He would keep the good and beautiful in His sight, and thereby hide from Himself the loathsome.

"*House*" may mean Temple; "*heritage*," the goodly land; "*beloved*," the people whom God had chosen and cherished. Note how He—

1. *Asserts His claim.* "*Mine* house, *mine* heritage," &c.

2. *Reveals His love.* Language instinct with affection: "The *dearly beloved of My soul.*"

"Loved us notwithstanding all."

3. *Laments His loss. Theirs* would be the greater loss far; God alienated, themselves expatriated from their country, &c.; yet *God* grieves to lose His children: "How can I give thee up?"

II. How God necessarily withdraws from those who violate their sacred relationship.

1. *He is not first,* but last *in alienating Himself.* "Slow to anger, and of great kindness." Separation between *humanity* and Jehovah began with humanity: Adam's sin. Separation between the *individual* and God begins with the individual:

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy;"

but wickedness banishes God as the life advances. Separation between the *heart* and God begins with the heart; doubts and hard thoughts admitted, or "iniquity is regarded in the heart," and hence the withdrawal of God. "Your sins have hid His face from you," &c. (Isa. lix. 2).

2. *He cannot perpetuate a violated relationship.* It would be unrighteous in itself, and injurious in its results.

3. *He wholly abandons the faithless.* "I have given—into the hand of her enemies." For there is no other alternative; either in God's love, or in the grasp of foes.

III. How God permits those who revolt from Him to suffer appropriate penalties. The correlate fact to "I have forsaken," is that Judah should be "*in the hand* of her enemies." It was only by *Jehovah keeping near* that *enemies were kept afar.*

1. They forfeit His providential protection.

2. Enemies are alert to seize as prey those whom God does not defend and befriend.

3. Their own resources of security and strength are futile.

4. A melancholy reversion of their former estate of privilege. "The dearly beloved" of God in her enemies' hand! Such repudiation of God's love has but one alternative: "delivered over to Satan," consigned to the foe of God and man.

Another outline:

I. Pre-eminent spiritual distinction. Raised into highest privilege, honour, and blessedness.

II. False grounds of assurance. Presumed upon her advantages, and violated the conditions of retaining them.

III. Glaring abuse of Divine grace. Her enjoyment of God's tender love makes her faithlessness the more criminal and abominable.

IV. Merited retribution. The "dearly beloved" given over to those who hated her, "her enemies." Even worse: the loving Jehovah Himself came to "*hate His once cherished* "*heritage*" (ver. 8).

How repugnant is sin to God! What dire results ensue to determined and defiant wrong-doers! The brighter the light, the blacker the darkness of its shadows; so the more "dearly beloved," the more terrible, the "outer darkness" of being "hated" by the Lord!

Starke comments: The heart of a believer is God's most cherished abode, but if man corrupt it with wilful sin, God must forsake His house (Isa. lix. 2).

Comments:

Ver. 8. "*Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest.*" One's heritage and patrimony is, we know, his delight. God shows that He was in His own heritage as though He was in a vast and wild forest, and the fields which ought to have been His delight were become

places of the greatest horror, as though a lion were roaring and raging.—*Calvin.*

Judah has not merely refused obedience, but shown itself intractable and fierce like an untamed lion. It has *roared against God* with open blasphemy.—*Speaker's Com.*

The reason why Jehovah gives up His people for a prey—it has behaved to God like a lion, *i.e.*, has opposed Him fiercely like a furious beast. Therefore He must withdraw His love.—*Keil.*

Ver. 9. The form of the verse is interrogative: *Is My heritage unto Me as a speckled bird? Are birds of prey round about her?* As around a strange bird—probably here a vulture—other carrion birds collect and cruelly abuse it, so would Judah's foes surround and destroy her; for God summons also "*all* the beasts of the field" to "devour" her.

Ver. 10–13. *Theme:* COMPLETE DEVASTATION OF THE LAND.

God speaks of this utter desolation of the land by the Chaldean army as a thing done; so near, so sure was it.

i. *See with what a tender affection He speaks of this land,* notwithstanding the sinfulness of it, in remembrance of His covenant, and the tribute of honour and glory He had formerly had from it. It is "My vineyard, My portion, My pleasant portion" (ver. 10). Note, God has a kindness and concern for His Church, though there be much amiss in it.

ii. *See with what a tender compassion He speaks of the desolations of this land.* "Many pastors have destroyed My vineyard," without any consideration either of the value of it or of My interest in it; they have with greatest *insolence* and indignation "trodden it under foot," and that which was a pleasant land they have made "a desolate wilderness." The destruction was *universal:* "the whole land is made desolate" (ver. 11). It is made so by the sword of war; "the spoilers," the Chaldean soldiers, "have come through the plain upon all high places" (ver. 12), made themselves masters of all the natural fastnesses and artificial fortresses. "No flesh shall have peace;" all have corrupted their way—none shall have peace.

iii. *See whence all this misery comes.* 1. From the displeasure of God: it is "the sword of the Lord that devours" (ver. 12). It was the "fierce anger of the Lord" (ver. 13), which kindled this fire among them, and made their enemies so furious. 2. It is their sin that has made God their enemy. Though the land "mourneth unto Me," pouring out its complaint over desolation before God, the inhabitants are so senseless and stupid that "none of them lays it to heart," unaffected by God's displeasure, while the very ground they go upon shames them.

iv. *See how unable they shall be to guard against it* (ver. 13). "They have sown wheat," *i.e.*, have taken pains for their own security, but "shall reap thorns," what shall prove grievous and vexatious to them. Instead of helping themselves, they shall but make themselves more uneasy. "Ashamed of your revenues," that they have depended so much upon their preparations for war; and their silver and gold shall "not profit" them in the day of the Lord's anger.—*Henry.*

Ver. 11. *Theme:* UNPITIED MISERY. "*The whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart.*"

Applicable to any scene where *evil thrives,* where *ruin* goes on unchecked, where ignorance, sin, and oppression work human wretchedness and overthrow.

Applicable to any special *national vice:* intemperance, poisonous literature, polluted pleasure; by which homes are wrecked, youth betrayed, the country weakened, wasted, or degraded.

Applicable to the scenes of *heathenism,* where benighted souls droop, where "the habitations of cruelty" rear themselves, where outrages on homes and conscience and life are enacted in the name of idolatry.

I. National woes should move us to patriotic sorrow. We ought to "*lay it to heart*" when our "land mourneth."

1. *As being ourselves a part of the nation;* identified with it, therefore

in quick sympathy with what happens to it, feeling its sorrows and wrongs to be our own. "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it."

2. *As being intrusted with responsibilities toward our nation.* We each share the benefits of the commonwealth, its laws, its protection, its commercial and social security, &c., therefore, we should to our ability protect its interests, rectify its wrongs, take part in its struggles, enter deeply into its great woes and wants.

3. *As being solicitous for our nation's weal.* Fired with the patriotic spirit, glowing with a sense of power to help and alleviate and bless; realising the service we can render to men and to God in a life of wise and benevolent enterprise, however lowly and obscure, or however public and imposing. What can be done for my people's good?

II. Torpid indifference surrenders a land to spoilers. These "spoilers" were intent on their end (ver. 12); they would capture and desolate the land. Spoilers are still active and plotting, seeking the *young*, the *gay*, the *ambitious*, the *intellectually vain*, aiming at their moral, social, mental, and spiritual overthrow.

1. *Indifference as to the menacing evils which were gathering.* No foresight, no apprehension. Some sleep unsuspecting till the enemy is at the gate. "We are not ignorant of his devices." "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation."

2. *Indifference as to the real cause of prevailing misery — irreligion.* Many seek to remedy ills without recognising the spring and source. Neglect of God explains human woe. But, ignoring the fact that impiety is at the root, they bring superficial ameliorations.

3. *Indifference as to the Divinely-sent calls to reform.* God appealed by His prophet to the nation to turn again to Him. Had they complied, the desolation would have been averted; but they cared not to hear the sacred message. So still the people sink into the power of sin, pleasure, worldliness, atheism, which bring desolations, because they *despise God's messages*, repudiate the Gospel of Christ, turn from the only Saviour of sinners, whose healing grace remedies human woes, and rectifies all the desolations sin has wrought.

III. Scenes of desolation summon us to holy endeavour. "Lay it to heart," not as an idle sentiment, but an inspiration to help.

1. *Christianity commissions its followers to helpful work.* It is the meaning of the Saviour's own example: "Seek and save that which is lost." It is the teaching of the New Testament: "Go and do likewise," *i.e.*, as did the good Samaritan to the man who had fallen among thieves, find your neighbour in the first sufferer you meet. Christianity makes missionaries, philanthropists, patriots of its disciples.

2. *Where the spoiler has desolated, there the Christian must go.* With a heart pitying the fallen, the perishing, and the blighted. "Into all the world." "To the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Ver. 14. *Theme:* A TRIPLE CONSOLATION. Equally true of the Church of Christ as of the kingdom of Judah.

I. God is watching, and will punish the adversaries of His people.

1. *They environ her:* "evil neighbours."

3. *They molest her:* "touch the inheritance"—her truths, her sacred joys.

3. *They invade her holy scenes:* intrude upon sacred soil; her sanctuary, to spoil its services; the privacy of prayer, to mar the soul's fellowship, &c.

4. Yet the Divine Friend of His people *observes* our foes; is "*against*" them, and therefore on our part; and will *requite* the evil done to them that are His.

II. God has purposes of grace for His suffering people.

1. Even though *their own wickedness explains their being in* the hand of foes.

2. *Yet He will not abandon them to their "evil neighbours;"* for our foes are not to be allowed the enjoyment of their successes. God has no favour towards His people's enemies; they shall be dispossessed of "the inheritance which I have caused My people to

inherit." Though the guilty take *our peace* from us, they shall not enjoy it: "no peace to the wicked." Though they deprive us of *our hopes*, they shall not inherit them: "having no hope."

3. *God will reclaim His people to Himself.* "I will pluck out the house of Judah from among them." He did this from the hands of Judah's enemies, restoring her to her heritage again; and "He will pluck out our feet from the net," deliver our souls from the spoiler, and save His Church from the sophistries of her foes (ver. 15).

III. God designs that even His people's enemies shall be converted unto Him. It would eventuate in the good of Judah's "evil neighbours" for her to be temporarily scattered into their lands, and for those neighbours to occupy Judah's heritage.

1. *It brought them into contact with Divine realities;* gave them knowledge of the religion of Judah. Those who entered her land could "walk about Zion," and learn something of the worship of Jehovah and the sacred oracles; whereas those people among whom Judah was dispersed could "diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name" (ver. 16). It offered them *opportunity.*

2. *The results proved a blessing to the heathen.* Many were converted to the Lord. So our Lord's crucifixion, His prayer for His enemies, availed to the conquest of some who saw and heard. The dispersion of the Early Church by Saul led to the conversion of many elsewhere. Foes are being won to-day even while assailing truth and ill-using Christ's followers.

3. *Converted enemies would then become united with God's people:* "Be built in the midst of My people" (ver. 16); a place given to them within her borders, and a share in her spiritual privileges: Gentiles gathered into Israel; sinners and even enemies drawn into Christ's Church. "He who persecuted the Church in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed" (Gal. i. 23). (Addenda on verse.)

Ver. 15. *Theme:* PROGRESSIVE ACTS OF REDEMPTION.

The complete work of Divine grace is not effected in one act; it distributes itself into *distinct parts*, sometimes into *distant periods.* As in the instance of these Jews and their neighbours, so in the experience of the sinner, God's redeeming work is accomplished by progressive stages.

I. Rescue. "I have *plucked them out.*" Divine deliverance—from wrong scenes, alien countries; or "from the horrible pit and miry clay;" or "plucked as a brand from the burning;" or "delivered from the bondage of corruption;" or "translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son." In any aspect of the experience, it is the initial incident in the process of redemption—*rescue.*

II. Reconciliation. "I will *return*, and have *compassion* on them." The coming back of the alienated God to the rescued soul. Not in judgment, nor to mark iniquity, nor to chide, but to cover over the whole evil past with the fulness of Divine "compassion." Blotting out transgression, drawing the rescued one near to the personal love of God in experience of renewed favour. "O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

III. Restitution. "I will *bring them again*, every man to *his heritage*, and every man to *his land.*" What sin had forfeited grace will restore. All which we have *lost by alienation* from God—peace, purity, happiness, holiness, heaven, is *restored by redemption.* 1. *Individual* restitution: "every man;" for God overlooks none, not even "the least of all saints." 2. *Complete* restitution: "to his *heritage*," the blessings to which he was born; the comforts and joys and privileges which would always have remained man's but for his self-impoverishing sinfulness: "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Also, "to his *land*," the *home* and *destiny* for which his heart craves.

And "our conversation is in heaven." "Every one of them shall appear in Zion before God."

Ver. 16. *Theme:* ALIENS UNITED IN THE CHURCH.

And these were mutually antagonistic. 1. *Politically:* "Judah," and "evil neighbours;" a historic antipathy estranged them, a national enmity separated them. 2. *Religiously:* each repudiated the other's religion, and derided their object or objects of worship. They were determined, avowed, and implacable foes.

Is there any meeting-place of union, any common centre of reconciliation for such? Yes, in Christ; in the Church of Emmanuel. "Other sheep I have, which are *not of this fold;* them also will I bring, that there may be one fold and one Shepherd."

I. The standard of qualification. All must "learn the ways" of God's people, and "swear by Jehovah's name."

1. *Renewal of life.* "Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light." To "learn the ways" of God's people implies *antipathy removed,* the mind and heart allured to assent to a "*newness of life,*" and so full a reformation of conduct as to become *assimilated* to God's people—(*a.*) *In practical godliness;* (*b.*) *in homage and service of the Lord.* For "*the ways*" of God's people are these—holy living and godly service.

2. *Allegiance to the Lord.* "Swear by My name, the Lord liveth" (comp. notes on chap. iv. 2). This means (*a*) *renunciation of other gods;* (*b*) *loyal attachment to Jehovah;* (*c*) *open profession of religion.*

II. The process of preparation. "Learn."

1. By *observation.* Seeing what Judah did. Men watch the righteous, and feel the force of example. The Christian life is as a "light shining in darkness;" men "see their good works," are influenced by the piety of their walk; and antagonism dies as they observe their "ways."

2. By *imitation.* From the *example* of the Jews among these "neighbours" there would be going out the continual call, "Come with us, we will do you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning His people." Also, *persuasive words* of teaching and entreaty could be spoken to those who were without, inviting them to join with God's people. And thus they would "learn the ways," and adopt them. Even as these heathen had beforetime "*taught Judah to swear by Baal,*" and thus allured them from Jehovah.

Qualification is progressive: it is the issue of *learning.* The alien becomes transformed by a gradual process into a "fellow-citizen of the saints and of the household of God."

III. The realisation of union. "They shall be built in the midst of My people." The stranger and the citizen established *in Zion.* The foe of Christ united to His followers in *the Church.* "One in Christ Jesus." "Gathered together in one."

1. *Alienations and distinctions are annihilated there.* A sacred sympathy and a common heritage in God's grace obliterate all antipathies. Nationality is lost in realisation of a heavenly citizenship: "there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, but all are one in Christ Jesus."

2. *A common Divine relationship unites all together.* "Built in the midst of *My people,*"—*i.e., identified with* and included among "My people." "All ye are brethren." "One family, we dwell in Him." The Church of Christ is on earth the meeting-place of all, irrespective of nationality or social gradation, who belong to the *brotherhood* and household of faith.

Ver. 17. *Theme:* THE ISSUE OF PERSISTENT ALIENATION.

God opened the door of reconciliation to them: His people would have taught them their "ways;" they might have become partakers of all Judah's privileges, and found a place within Zion. But repudiating all, nothing remained but complete overthrow and destruction. No place among God's people means outcast, abandoned, destroyed.

I. A defiant will. Not powerless to "obey," but determination "*not*" to obey: deliberate resistance of Judah's persuasions, and rejection of Divine opportunity. Refused to "learn" or "obey."

II. An alarming penalty. The issue of such defiance is made clear: no equivocation. "I have set before you life and death."

III. A terrible punishment. "I will utterly pluck up and destroy." "Punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. **Talking with God.** Never shall we be lonely, never have to complain of want of companionship, if we acquire this blessed habit of talking with God. There was an old Scotchman sitting by his humble fire, and a visitor asked him if he was not lonesome sitting there all day, and he said, "Nae, nae; I just sit here clacking wi' Jesus." When we remember that "clacking" is with the Scotch the word for friendly talking, it will be seen there was no irreverence in the old man's words, but something to be envied and admired.—*Power.*

Many, with the best intentions, propounded that God is too great to attend to our little things; and all kindred theories have one point at least in common, viz., the idea that *close converse* could not be held with God, that He could not be spoken to at all times by plain folk, in a plain way, about things.—*Idem.*

There is such a thing as talking with God. It is said, in that venerable old record, that "in the cool of the day God walked in the garden, and called to Adam." I know one thing, that that same habit has continued to this day, for I have in the cool of the day, on the hillside, a hundred times talked with Him too. God is accustomed to come down; He makes Himself, by the power of the Holy Ghost, a guest. There is such a thing as communion with Christ, as one speaketh to a friend face to face. —*Beecher.*

"When one that holds communion with the skies
Has filled his urn where those pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings:
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied."—Cowper

God's judgments. The heavier the cannon, with the more difficulty are they drawn; but when arrived, they recompense the slowness of their march by the fierceness of their battery. The longer the stone is in falling, the more it will bruise and grind to powder. There is a great treasure of wrath laid up by the abuse of patience.—*Charnock.*

Thy judgments, saith the prophet, are sometimes secret, always just; this I am well assured of, though I thus argue. Yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments; let me take the humble boldness so to do, that I may be further cleared and instructed by Thee. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper, whilst better men suffer, as now the wicked Anathothites do, whilst I go in danger of my life by them? This question hath exercised the wits and molested the minds of many wise men, both within and without the Church. (See Job xxi. 7–13; Ps. xxxvii. 1, lxxiii. 1–12; Hab. i. 4, 5.) Plato, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Claudian against Ruffin, &c.—*Trapp.*

Prosperity of the wicked. Satan with ease puts fallacies upon us by his golden baits, and then he leads us and leaves us in a fool's paradise. The world hath by the glistering of her pomp and preferment slain millions; as the serpent Scytale, which, when she cannot overtake the fleeting passengers, doth with her beautiful colours astonish and amaze them, so that they have no power to pass away till she have stung them to death. Adversity hath slain her thousands, but prosperity her ten thousand.—*Brooks.*

It is the bright day that brings out the adder. . . . Too much sail is dangerous. . . . A coat too richly embroidered only encumbers the wearer.

. . . Too much sunshine weakens the eyes.

Ver. 3. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEART. There is a recent application of electricity by which, under the influence of its powerful light, the body can be so illuminated as that the workings beneath the skin can be seen. Lift up the hand and it will appear almost translucent, the bones and veins clearly appearing. It is so in some sort with God's introspection of the human heart. His eye, which shines brighter than the sun, searches us and discovers us altogether.—*Pilkington.*

Ver. 4. "HE SHALL NOT SEE OUR LAST END." *God* shall not, and so they deny His providence and prescience; or the *prophet* shall not, though now he thunder out our punishment with so great vehemence.—*Trapp.*

Mercury could not kill Argus till he had cast him into a sleep, and with an enchanted rod closed his eyes; and the devil cannot hurt any man till he has lulled him asleep in security.—*Playter.*

Ver. 5. "WHAT WILT THOU DO?" We should quit ourselves like men, and not be perturbed by little rivulets; for if these sweep us away, what shall we do when Jordan is swollen to the brim, and we have to pass through that? When one of the martyrs, whose name is the somewhat singular one of Pommely [*Trapp* gives it as William Cobberly,] was confined previous to his burning, his wife was also taken up upon the charge of heresy. The good woman had resolved to die with her husband, and she appeared, as far as most people could judge, to be very firm in her faith. But the jailor's wife, though she had no religion, took a merciful view of the case as far as she could do so, and thought, "I am afraid this woman will never stand the test, she will never brave death with her husband; she has neither faith nor strength to endure such a trial;" and therefore, one day calling her out of the cell, she said to her. "Lass, run to the garden and fetch me the key that lies there." The poor woman ran willingly enough; she took the key up and it burned her fingers, for the jailor's wife had made it red hot; she came back crying with pain. "Ah, woman," said she, "if you cannot bear a little burn in your hand, how will you bear to be burnt in your whole body?" and this brought her to recant the faith she had professed. I apply the story thus: If we cannot bear the trifling pangs which come upon us in our ordinary circumstances, which are but as it were the burning of our hands, what shall we do when every pulse beats pain, and every throb is an agony, and the whole tenement begins to crumble about the spirit that is so soon to be disturbed?—*C. H. Spurgeon, comp. Trapp on verse.*

"I have no hope in what I have been or done," said Dr. Doddridge on his dying bed, "yet I am full of confidence; and this is my confidence: there is hope set before me. I have fled, I still fly, for refuge to that hope. In Him I trust, in Him I have strong consolation, and shall assuredly be accepted in this Beloved of my soul."

Ver. 14. Converted enemies. It is recorded of a Chinese emperor, that, on being apprised of his enemies having raised an insurrection in one of the distant provinces, he said to the officers, "Come, follow me, and we will quickly destroy them." He marched forward, and the rebels submitted at his approach. All now thought that he would take the most signal revenge, but were surprised to see the captives treated with mildness and humanity. "How!" cried the first minister, "is this the manner in which you carry out your threat? Your royal word was given that your enemies should be destroyed, and behold you have pardoned them all, and even caressed some of them." "I promised," replied the emperor, with a generous air, "to destroy my enemies. I have fulfilled my word; for see, they are *enemies* no longer. I have made friends of them."

Ver. 15. "Every man to his heritage." To the Church; for in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness shall be accepted of Him, shall have a child's part, even the reward of inheritance.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 16. Union in the Church.

When mankind depart from God, they lose the bond of unity and peace. They are divided then into parties, which contend with and exterminate each other; but when these have again united themselves with the Lord, the unity of the members is restored. Therefore, there is liberty, equality, fraternity only in the Lord.—*Naegelsbach.*

Ver. 17. The issue of defiance.

"Alas! we were warned, but we recked not the warning,
Till our warriors grew weak in the day of despair,
And our glory was fled as the light of the morning,
That gleams for a moment, and melts into air."
—DALE.

CHAPTER XIII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. The reference in ver. 18 to the "queen" is regarded as determining the date of this chapter. Ewald, Hitzig, Umbreit, Dahler, Hend., and Dr. Payne Smith agree in identifying her as Nehushta, the queen-mother of Jehoiachin. For, although it is conjectural whether Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) was eighteen years of age at his accession (see 2 Kings xxiv. 8) or only eight (comp. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9), certainly his mother shared with him the responsibilities of royalty and of government; and together the mother and son were dethroned: of which event this verse is peculiarly descriptive. But Keil and Bleek incline to put the prophecy in Jehoiakim's reign, explaining that the "queen," his mother Zebuda, in common with all queen-mothers, would retain prominence and power (comp. 1 Kings xv. 13; 2 Kings x. 13), and the mention of her does not necessarily imply the king's minority. The reason for preferring Jehoiakim's reign to that of his successor Jehoiachin, is that after the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign the northern foe is uniformly definitely spoken of as the Chaldeans; whereas in this chapter the allusion is indeterminate. But there is a general appropriateness in this whole chapter to Jehoiachin's reign which prevails to fix its date: *i.e.*, B.C. 597; or, according to Assyrian chronology, B.C. 579.

2. Cotemporary Scriptures.—2 Kings xxiv. 8–16; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9, 10.

3. National Affairs.—Jehoiachin abandoned himself to flagrant ungodliness immediately upon his accession; and as promptly asserted his revulsion from the now Chaldean domination, for only three months pass ere we find Nebuchadnezzar's generals again besieging Jerusalem. The power of resistance was gone; help from Egypt was no longer available after the defeat at Charchemish, while also the harassing inroads of the "evil neighbours" (see on chap. xii. 14) had kept the Jews in irretrievable subjection. Consequently, without offering more than a show of resistance the king and queen-dowager surrendered themselves, and both they and the princes, troops, artificers, and principal inhabitants of Jerusalem, together with Ezekiel the prophet, were carried captive to Babylon (comp. 2 Kings xxiv. 14–16; Jer. lii. 28).

4. Cotemporary History.—Egypt prostrate under Chaldean ascendancy. Nebuchadnezzar incited armed bands of the Moabites, Ammonites, &c., to frequent incursions of Judea, thus maintaining his conquest, and keeping the Jews impotent and defenceless.

5. Geographical References.—Ver. 4. "*Euphrates:*" here called *Phrath*; most frequently mentioned simply as "the river." It was distinctively *the* river of Western Asia, rising in the Armenian Mountains, flowing through the wildest districts of Armenia by a tortuous course towards the Mediterranean, diverted by the ranges of Amanus and Lebanon, whence it moves onward for above 1000 miles towards the Persian Gulf: its entire course being calculated at 1780 miles, 1200 miles of which is navigable by boats. An annual inundation occurs in May, occasioned by the melting snows on the Armenian heights. Mentioned as one of the four rivers of Eden (Gen ii. 14). See *Lit. Crit.* on verse, below. Ver 19. "*Cities of the South:*" Grotius regards this as a reference to *Egypt* (comp. Isa. xxx. 6; Dan. xi. 5), indicating that no help could come to them from thence. More properly, the southern cities of Judah, which are blockaded by the enemy: hence flight to the south is no longer possible (see on chap. vi. 1).

6. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 18. "*The king and the queen*": see *supra*, on *Chronology of the Chapter*. Ver. 23. "*Ethiopian:*" Heb. *Cushite:* "inhabitant of Abyssinia, or the *African* Cush" (Hend.). The Cushite of Arabia, whose colour would not be so swarthy in comparison with the inhabitant of Palestine as to render the reference to "his skin" specially significant, could scarcely be here meant; but the Cushite of Africa, *i.e.*, the negro, would supply at once an emphatic suggestion.

7. Natural History.—Ver. 23. "*The leopard his spots:*" see on chap. v. 6. The ordinary Hebrew word for leopard is נָמֵר, so called from being spotted. But in this verse the word is חַבַּרְבֻּרוֹת, from the root חָבַר, *to be marked with stripes or lines, variegated*, the striped panther. As the Hebrews had no name for the *tiger*, this animal was probably comprised by them under the same descriptive word.

8. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 1. "*Linen girdle:*" the common girdle, worn by both sexes in the East, was of leather; the *linen* girdle was sometimes embroidered with either silk, gold, or silver thread, and studded with gems, fastened with a clasp of silver or gold. Ver. 11. "*The girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man:*" comp. Isa. v. 27, xi. 5. Ver. 12. "*Every bottle shall be filled with wine:*" various words rendered "bottle:" *nod*, *chémeth*. *ob*, *chemah'*, *bakbuk'*, and *nébel:* by these two latter probably *earthen* vessels are denoted; *nébel* being rendered (Lam. iv. 2) by "pitchers;" for evidently other bottles than those made of skin and leather were in common use (Jer. xix. 1); while also these "bottles filled with wine" could be "*dashed* one against another" (ver. 14). The word is more appropriately rendered *jar*, the "potter's vessel" of Isa. xxx. 14. Ver. 22. "*Skirts discovered, and heels made bare:*" allusion to "the long flowing robes (שׁוּל is a *train* rather than a *skirt*) worn by ladies of rank" (Speaker's Com.). These robes would be violently upturned (*cf.* ver. 26): Hend. = "*thrown up:*" and the heels *made bare*, rather *ill-used*, roughly treated: Hend. = her sandals torn off with violence: Chr. B. Michaelis = loading the feet with chains: Hitzig = affront done to the person suggested by mention of the heels: Keil and Payne Smith = she would be driven forth into exile barefoot, with violence and the rod. *Cf.* Nahum iii. 5. It describes "an ancient mode of punishing prostitutes" (Hend.). Ver. 27. "*Neighings:*" *cf.* notes on chap. v. 8. "*On the hills in the field:*" in the most conspicuous localities she had carried on an incestuous traffic with idols, revelling in the shameless heathen orgies (*cf.* Notes on chap. ii. 24, v. 7).

9. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 4. "*Euphrates:*" פְּרָתָה. The LXX., Vulg., and other ancient versions give *Phrath* as Euphrates. The word occurs in fifteen other places; in twelve instances the word *river* is prefixed; in three it stands, as in this chapter, alone; and in all those cases *Phrath* means the Euphrates. But the word Phrath is here used (vers. 4–7) four times, and not once is the word *river* added; and this difficulty, the LXX. met by supplying ποταμόν. Bochart, Venema, Dathe, Hitzig, Henderson, and others prefer to take Phrath as an abbreviation of *Ephrath*, אֶפְרָת, the original name of Bethlehem. This rendering avoids the difficulty of the fact that a journey of over 200 miles would have had to be taken twice by Jeremiah if the Euphrates be meant; whereas Bethlehem was distant but six miles. Ver. 18. "*The queen:*" גְּבִירָה, the *great-lady;* once applied to the queen-regnant (1 Kings xi. 19), but usually means the queen-mother (Speaker's Com.). "As the Jewish kings generally married subjects and lived in polygamy, the king's mother took precedence of his wives" (Hitzig). "*Your principalities:*" מֹרַאשֹׁתֵיכֶם, *i.e., the ornaments of your head*, namely, your splendid crown. Ver. 21. "*to be captains, chief over thee:*" Keil and Speaker's Com. render the verse, *What wilt thou say, when* (or if) *He set over thee for head* (for a head) *those whom thou hast taught to be thy bosom friends* (hast accustomed to thee as thy familiar friends)! The Jews had courted the friendly alliance of the Chaldean king and princes; now they would become their tyrannical rulers. The translation of the verse turns upon the meaning given to אַלֻּפִים, rendered in A.V. "captains." Luther, and after him Gesenius, Rosen., and Lange render it *princes*—"Whom thou hast trained to be princes over thee:" this meaning is sustained in Gen. xxvi. 15, Zech. ix. 7. But its more ordinary signification is *familiar, friend* (*cf.* Psa. lv. 14, Prov. xvi 28, Mic. vii. 5). It occurs in chap. xi. 19, tame, domesticated (see Notes *in loc.*). Ver. 25 "Trusted *in falsehood:*" *cf.* Notes on chap. x. 8. Ver. 27. "*When shall it once be?*"—Lit *After how long yet!* A conjectural outlook on the far distant purification of the now polluted nation.

HOMILIES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XIII.

Vers. 1–11. An acted parable—the spoiled linen girdle.
,, 12–17. A parable in speech—intoxicating judgments.
,, 18–27. An iniquitous nation openly degraded.

Vers. 1–11. An Acted Parable—the Spoiled Linen Girdle.

Symbolic acts sometimes teach more impressively than eloquent words. A clean linen girdle purchased and worn, but never washed: then carried away to the Euphrates and buried for many days: finally disinterred, found to be marred, and pronounced worthless. Thus facts are portrayed to Jeremiah's observers: Judah girded into closest connection with Jehovah, yet her impurity was never removed: in consequence she was to be carried to Babylon and lost among the heathen for a long period: ultimately, when brought back, she is found "profitable for nothing:" "*For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the* LORD; *that they*

might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; but they would not hear."

NOTE.—Great contention among commentators whether this journey to Euphrates was *actual* or *merely visionary*. It is objected to the occurrence being *literal*, that the Euphrates was nearly 250 miles distant, that two journeys would have entailed long absence of the prophet from the scene of his urgent ministry. Several scholars, to avoid this supposed difficulty, incline to the locality being not Euphrates but Ephratha, as being near at hand (see *Lit. Crit.*), but this forfeits the whole meaning of the buried girdle—God's people *localised and lost* among *Babylonish scenes*. Objections to its being merely a *visionary incident* are,—1. The extreme literalness of the statement, no pretext being left in the narrative for an allegorical interpretation (see ver. 5). 2. The lengthy journey was a small matter compared with the vast and vivid lessons thereby taught to Judah—that she would be carried far away from her present scenes of privilege, and be lost in distant exile. 3. Also Jeremiah's visits to the scene of his nation's approaching captivity would supply him with valuable information ready against the emergency, and prove deeply impressive to his own spirit, and helpful to his ministry. Here consider,

I. **How closely Jehovah binds His chosen people to Himself.** "As the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man" (ver. 11), &c. Though their banishment was becoming imperative, yet God here testifies His attachment to them, and declares He had, without any reserve, bound them intimately and lovingly to Himself: they were "a people *near* unto Him" (Psa. cxlviii. 14).

II. **The sacred character which His people bear in His esteem.** "Get thee a *linen* girdle" (ver. 1). A mistake to suppose it was to be "linen" because it was to be worn as an inner garment next the skin; though that might be impressive of the close union of His people with the Lord: but this people—like a beautiful girdle—was to be "for a name, a praise, and a glory" (ver. 11), hence *worn visibly* as the girdle worn by the wealthy and by the high priest—a thing of beauty. But its being "linen" indicates that it was the *sacerdotal* girdle; for God's people were to Him "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6). With this sacred character He invested them; for He designed they should be a pure, priestly, consecrated people. Even as are Christ's redeemed ones (1 Pet. ii. 5).

III. **A holy people are capable of proving an adornment to Jehovah.** "That they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and a praise, and a glory" (ver. 11); even as the beautifully-wrought girdle, embroidered with silk and gold, and decorated with gems, was to the wearer (1 Sam. xviii. 4; Dan. x. 5; Rev. i. 13, xv. 6), and as the "curious girdle of the ephod" (Exod. xxviii. 8) was a work of exquisite grace. Note: God's people are a *choice and beautiful work* (Eph. ii. 10), and are designed to *adorn and glorify Him*.

IV. **Although so closely identified with God, impurity was contracted by His people.** "Put it not in water" (ver. 1). Necessarily, therefore, the girdle became soiled; and from its defilement it was not cleansed. How truly descriptive of Israel and Judah! The longer they were God's people the less pure they became. Defilement was contracted, and their state became increasingly corrupt. Pure as a "linen girdle" when first bound to God, they grew soiled, stained, filthy with wear. Is this not too true of God's people still?—the early days of their betrothment were their best and holiest days (*cf.* ii. 2, 3).

V. **Because of this impurity His people are carried away from holy scenes into exile.** "Arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock" (ver. 4). Canaan was chosen for the residence of a godly nation; Jerusalem was the place of God's glory—"Holiness becometh Thine house, O God, for ever." 1. *Defilement disqualifies us for sacred privileges.* 2. *Impurity separates God's people from Him:* the girdle was *unclasped* from the prophet's loins, and laid aside in the land of the heathen; for "your iniquities have separated," &c. (Isa. lix. 2)

Defiled souls are, in God's regard, *placed among the heathen.* All pride and self-glorying are thereby put to shame (vers. 9, 10). The unclean shall not stand before Him.

VI. Banishment from God is a pitiable experience for His people. "Behold the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing." *Afflictions* sometimes hallow the spirit; but *estrangement from God* never brings good results. Iniquity in "the redeemed of the Lord" *degrades piety* altogether and *dishonours Jehovah.* A fallen Christian can never be any honour to his Master; he may be recalled—as these banished ones were—but he is "marred, profitable for nothing." He may illustrate God's fathomless grace in showing how poor and profitless a soul may be, and yet be saved; but he is of no use for the high purpose God had in redeeming him, that he should be *to Him for a name, and a praise, and a glory!*

The Mystery of Election.

Naegelsbach, on this section, remarks: "The Lord has put on Israel as a girdle for *His own adornment* and for *Israel's highest glory.* This figure is unquestionably one of the most precious which the Scripture employs to represent the *mystery of election.* Elsewhere Israel is called Jehovah's inheritance (Deut. iv. 20, vii. 6), His wife and His beloved bride (Hos. ii. 16, *sqq.*; Jer. ii. 2), His first-born son (Exod. iv. 22), His servant (Isa. xli. 8), His flock (Jer. xiii. 17), His vineyard (Isa. v. 7), His signet ring (Hag. ii. 23). Like the last emblem, the girdle also denotes—

i. *The closest intimacy.* ii. *Indispensable service.* iii. *A valuable ornament.*

But *great as is the love* which the Lord thus shows to Israel in calling them His girdle, *as great is the severity* with which He declares that the honour thus received will not save them from destruction.

Let every particular Christian Church mark this! However *closely* it may be *attached to the Lord,* this saves it neither from, (1) *Internal corruption,* nor from (2) *External judgment* (comp. Luke iii. 8, 9)."

Vers. 12–17. A Parable in Speech—Intoxicating Judgments.

"Every bottle shall be filled with wine. . . . I will fill all the inhabitants of this land . . . with drunkenness." The figure is not understood by the people, they see not its deeper significance (ver. 12); so it is explained by Jehovah, and then appears terrible in import (vers. 13, 14).

I. The Divine parable ominous of misery and ruin. The nation, every man, should be filled with the wine of God's wrath, and in a drunken frenzy should destroy one another. The *highest* in the realm—"kings;" the *holiest* in the nation—"priests and prophets;" *all classes of society*—"inhabitants;" shall become mutually destructive of the state and nation: the nation would become *factious* and *fanatical,* and hurry on its own ruin.

1. *A delirious nation:* "filled with drunkenness," folly, and frenzy, like an intoxicated man, giddy, blustering, boastful, and violent.

2. *A destructible nation:* "every bottle;" brittle vessels: with all their arrogance. Easily destroyed: "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."

3. *A demented nation:* "proud" (ver. 15), "my soul shall weep for *your pride*" (ver. 17); inflated with a voluble conceit, arrogant, even in their degradation and peril: incapable as a drunken man of defending himself, yet noisily boastful and vain. "Whom God will destroy—He infatuates."

4. *A desolated nation:* "dash them one against another:" the wild fury of drunken frenzy would drive the nation into hostile factions and ruinous agitations; civil contentions, mutually destructive, "dashing one against another."

II. The prophet's expostulation admonitory and pathetic. "Hear ye, and give ear," &c. (vers. 15–17): they were heedless and reckless.

1 *He appeals to the high authority of his message:* "the LORD hath spoken." They had repudiated Jeremiah: now they had to do with *Jehovah.*

2. *He exposes the secret of their hardened indifference:* "be not proud." The cause of their contumacy was pride: just as humility is the spring of obedience, pride is the motive to refractoriness, rebellion, and obstinate impiety.

3. *He announces the remedy for their evil state:* "give glory to the Lord your God." Their apostacy and impenitence must be abandoned; for by ceasing from the iniquity that *displeases and dishonours God* (Josh. xvii. 19), they could "give Him glory." Sin is an assault upon Jehovah's glory; repentance and reconciliation yield Him glory.

4. *An alternative is presented of plaintive misery:* "before He cause darkness," &c.—all *their joys and comforts covered with gloom:* "and your feet stumble upon the dark mountains"—*wandering bewildered amid terrors and perils:* "while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death"—*all hope be extinguished in the dense death-shade of despair:* "and make it grow darkness"—*total spiritual night,* in which God and knowledge of Him are wholly lost; "darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isa. lx. 2).

5. *A piteous bewailing over his wretched nation* (ver. 17). (*a.*) For their *self-ruinous "pride,"* he would weep "in secret," for very shame at their obdurate sin. (*b.*) For *their lamentable desolation* his eyes would "weep sore" in open grief, because of the woe of their captivity. He commiserated their misery, and felt anguish for their ruin. Amid it all note—1. He still speaks to Judah of Jehovah as "*your God*" (ver. 16); the Almighty Friend still availed them if they would heed His word. 2. He still speaks of Judah as "*the* LORD'S *flock*" (ver. 17), claimed by Him, and cherished even though they were wilful and perverse. What exhaustless pitifulness is there in Jehovah! "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy."

THE EARTHEN PITCHERS.

Naegelsbach suggests the following points:—

i. *What they signify:* proud, yet perishable things; the world.

ii. *What will be their fate:* "dash them," &c. (ver. 14); "carried away captives" (ver. 17).

iii. *What is the means of escaping this fate:* a humble attention to the Lord (ver. 15); glorifying God by their repentance and return to Him (ver. 16).

Vers. 18–27. AN INIQUITOUS NATION OPENLY DEGRADED.

To put his nation to the deepest blush for their sin, Jeremiah again compares their conduct with Jehovah to the vile and graceless behaviour of an adulteress; and likens the shame, which would cover his people in consequence, to the open disgrace with which a prostitute was sometimes treated (see *Manners and Customs, supra*).

I. Royalty addressed in bold reproof and warning (vers. 18, 19). See Addenda on ver. 18, *the queen,* and *rebuking royalty*). Upon them is threatened—i. The loss of their dignity and crown. ii. The capture of their cities and captivity of their people. Observe:

1. *God's judgments do not spare those in highest station.* Jechoniah had sinned, and by his royal example encouraged the licentiousness and ungodliness of the nation. Therefore he and his queen-mother should be "*humbled;*" and are called to "sit down," as slaves on the ground (Isa. xlvii. 1). It is high treason against the King of kings for royal personages to rebel against His rule and laws; theirs shall be the greater condemnation; *their station degraded, their crown forfeited.* "*Fallen is your crown.*" A faithful witness for God may have to reprove kings in His name.

2. *The conquest of their cities is threatened as a retribution:* "The crown falls when the king loses country and kingship" (*Keil*). "The cities of the south" are specified, not because the enemy had first possessed himself of the southern extremity of the land (as Sennacherib did, advancing on the capital from the south, 2 Kings xviii. 13; xix. 8), but because they were the cities most distant from the north-coming foe; hence, when they were in his power, it implied the whole land was conquered. Thus the prophet threatens against godless royalty, the degradation of their station, the forfeiture of their crown, the conquest of their country the captivity of their people.

II. Jerusalem summoned to witness the woes of capture. "Lift up your eyes, and behold," &c. (ver. 20). The verb, *Lift up*, is fem., and refers to *Lion* understood. Upon Jerusalem is here threatened—

1. *Depopulation.* "Where is the flock?" Her streets are to be deserted, her inhabitants carried afar. Or "she is asked where the cities, which once lay grouped around her, like a goodly flock of sheep, are gone? The question implies blame. It was the example of Jerusalem which had led the cities of Judah into sin (Micah i. 5), and brought upon them an invading army" (*Speaker's Com.*)

2. *Foreign domination.* (See *Lit. Crit.* on ver. 21.) What could Jerusalem say when they, whom she had courted into power as allies, should assert their power as conquerors? We call in ungodly resources of help when our sin forfeits God's protection; these, our allies, will become our tyrants, ruling us with a sore and unchallengeable despotism.

III. Debasement of licentious Judah vividly portrayed.

1. *Affected innocence silenced by a condemning charge* (ver. 22, see *Crit. Notes* on verse).

2. *Her doom justified in that her iniquity transcended remedy* (ver. 23). Nothing can alter and improve her state. Her habitual spiritual licentiousness had become inveterate and incurable: expatriation therefore must ensue (ver. 24).

3. *God associates Himself with her degradation and doom.* She had despised His grace; repudiated His calls; ignored Him for idols—"*falsehood;*" but she should recognise Him in the judgments He had *measured to her* (ver. 26).

4. *Disloyalty to her Lord punished with appropriate degradation* (ver. 27; see *Crit. Notes*). Openly put to shame. Her sin had been open: God would expose her to open contempt (Lam. i. 8). Politically degraded.

5. *Vileness depicted, cleansing despaired of* (ver. 27; see *Lit. Crit.*). Jeremiah counts it impossible that she will soon be cleansed; her case seems hopeless. The present generation cleaves immovable to wickedness. Yet, in the far future, after sore judgments, there may be reform! On the prophet's despair there falls one faint gleam of hope.

HOMILETIC OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1-11. *Theme:* BURIED GIFTS.

I. God confers upon man innumerable gifts of talent, privilege, opportunity, blessing. In the case of the Jew especially great.

II. These gifts are suited to our circumstances and requirements (Matt. xxv. 15).

III. These gifts are intended for our good and God's glory (ver. 11).

IV. The use to which we apply them depends upon man's wisdom and will (vers. 10, 11; Matt. xxv. 24, 25).

V. In this men often fail. The history of the Jew an illustration. Men fail through ignorance, sloth, negligence, lust and impulsiveness, unfaithfulness, pride, selfishness. Men bury their gifts in these things.

VI. Buried they are lost. 1. God withdraws them (ver. 9; Matt. xxv. 29). 2. The power to use them departs (2 Cor. ix. 6). 3. They rot and decay. The grave is the house of decay (ver. 8; Eccles. ix. 10).

Learn—

1. That man is blessed with treasure gifts capable of unlimited development.

2. That, by neglecting these, instead of rising to be an angel, he sinks to be a fiend.

3. That we should guard them jealously and cultivate them diligently.

—*E. Jerman.*

Ver. 2. *Theme:* SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

I. We are responsible for the effort to obtain the girdle of truth. "I got the girdle."

II. We can get the girdle of truth only by knowing the Word of the Lord. "According to the word of the Lord."

III. We must make appropriate use of the girdle when it has been obtained. "Put it upon my loins."

IV. We can expect further knowledge of God's Word only by the use of what we already know (ver. 3). "The word of the Lord came unto me the *second* time."—*W. Whale.*

Ver. 3. *Theme:* GOD'S WORD TO MEN. "The word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying."

I. Jehovah is always speaking to man by one method or another. Creation, providence, revelation.

II. Some persons in all ages and climes have heard His Word. In mystery, in power, in mercy. Some have heard it many times.

III. It is a moment of supreme importance when any one soul becomes conscious of hearing the voice of God. Adam, Cain, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, &c., &c.

IV. The way in which a man treats the Word of God will show—

1. His present spiritual condition.
2. His general course of conduct.
3. His probable future destiny.

—*W. Whale.*

Ver. 2–5. *Theme:* THE STANDARD OF GODLY CONDUCT. "So I got a girdle *according to the word of the Lord.* So I went and hid it *as the Lord commanded me.*" Letting God's word rule and regulate our life absolutely.

I. The surrenders it involves. It gives up the life into God's hands, every faculty and purpose submitted to Him, yielded gladly to the requirements and captivity of Christ.

1. The surrender of the *will:* letting God rule; doing what He bids, bowing personal desires and plans to His purposes. "Not my will, but Thine, be done." *Unselfish obedience.*

2. Surrender of the *judgment:* perplexing to Jeremiah to see why he must wear this girdle, why go to Euphrates, why hide the girdle there, &c. God's "ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts," &c. *Unquestioning obedience.*

3. Surrender of *ease:* a toilsome journey of nearly 250 miles, twice taken. *Uncomplaining obedience.*

4. Surrender of *time:* occupy weeks in obeying these demands of God. Conscience must stand aside. *Ungrudging obedience.*

5. Surrender of *self*, of the life, of *all:* "Keep back no part of the price." "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth." "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" *Unreserved obedience.* (See Addenda, "*Perfect obedience.*")

II. The satisfaction it inspires. The yielding of self to God brings choice and compensatory advantages.

1. It gives *simplicity* to our life. "The eye is single." No other lord rules. God is everything to us. "One is our Master, even Christ"—not self, not custom, not the world, &c.

2. It gives *decision* to our life. Saves us from "halting between two opinions:" for the Lord is God and we follow Him. Saves us from uncertainty: His word is law. From delay: To hear Him is to respond. From conflict of conviction: we only need a call from Him: have not to select or choose our way. Anywhere, if only He commands.

3. It gives *repose* to our life. We are not burdened with the responsibility of life: we "are the Lord's," He guides and plans and arranges for us. We "live exempt from care." Our motto is,

> "Lead Thou me on! One step's enough for me!"

4. It gives *nobleness* to our life. What a grovelling career they live who obey *themselves*—fitful, earthly, restless. Or the *customs of society*—slaves to the

caprice of fashion. Or the "*god of this world*"—"led captive by him." But Christ calls into a high and holy career: godly and Godward. They who live only to obey Him, unreservedly obedient, He leads by still waters, into pleasant heritages of rest, assurance, and joy divine.

5. It gives *sanctity* to our life. He who lives for God becomes more godly and God-like. Wise in His wisdom, strong in His strength, sufficient in His sufficiency, true in His rightness, holy in His holiness. He will guide by His counsels, lead in the "good and right way," until the life rises to His blest abode. "Follow me!" is the Saviour's call: and the issue is, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

Ver. 5. *Theme:* ASPECTS OF PASTORAL SERVICE. Jeremiah was to go to Euphrates; perhaps not solely to hide this girdle: exiles were there, to whom he might carry messages and comfort from Jehovah; Ezekiel and Daniel were there, and with them he might hold helpful converse.

i. *His own toilsome obedience* would be a lesson to his disobedient nation, inciting them to take pains even in order to fulfil God's commands.

ii. *His resolute performance* of this mission would awaken in his people attention to the significance of his conduct, and impress them with the lessons designed.

I. **Self-sacrificing obedience to God enforces its lessons on others.** Our people will heed our consecrated lives, though they may ignore our eloquent words. A living sermon has vast power.

II. **God's chosen servants must yield Him absolute subjection.** What God bids, they must do; where He sends, they must go. Ministers of Christ must be willing to accept His demands unquestioningly and entirely; to lay themselves out for any service which may be for the good of their people; to spend and be spent in the Master's service and their nation's weal.

Ver. 5, 6. *Theme*: GOD'S COMMANDMENTS.

i. *Always wise and authoritative.*

ii. *Often mysterious, and, to human reason, apparently absurd.*

iii. *Can be heartily carried out only by a true believer* in the divine wisdom, power, and love.

iv. *May involve much effort*, inconvenience, and suffering. Journey from Jerusalem to Euphrates must have been very trying.

v. *Will effectually test the condition of the soul.* "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." "To obey is better than sacrifice." "I do alway those things which please the Father." "Leaving us an example," &c., &c. "Our sufficiency is of God."

Application: "This is His commandment, that ye believe on His Son whom He hath sent." "His commandments are not grievous."—*W. Whale.*

Ver. 7. *Theme:* THE INJURIOUSNESS OF ESTRANGEMENT FROM GOD. "The girdle was marred."

I. **The original sacredness and beauty of the godly soul.**

1. "*Linen*" indicates the sacerdotal girdle: the soul was *sacred* in God's esteem.

2. "*Linen*" suggests the *purity* of the soul in its first love.

3. The "*linen girdle*" was curiously and exquisitely wrought in choice colours and precious gems; betokening *the beauty and spiritual grace* of the soul when first allied to God.

4. The girdle *clasped upon the prophet* denotes the *close mutual attachment* between the soul and God in the hour of first love; and also the resolute design of God to keep that soul bound—"clasped"—to Himself.

II. **The defiled soul separated from the Lord.** It necessarily became soiled by being worn, yet linen will wash, and it *could*, therefore, be cleansed.

1. *The cleansing process* was neglected. "Put it not in water" (ver. 1). This represents the criminality of Judah. There was "water," easily found, ready to hand: so is there Divine cleansing; "A Fountain open for sin and uncleanness:" but the defiled life is "*not* put in water."

2. *A tainted thing* must be removed from God. Nothing impure will the-

Holy One of Israel retain. "He cannot look upon iniquity." Certainly He will not wear as an ornament a thing defiled. So the tainted girdle was *carried away:* "Take the girdle, and arise, go to Euphrates" (ver. 4).

3. *A faithless soul is banished.* Afar from holy scenes, *buried in a hole*, as unfit for any to see: for nothing is more loathsome to God's sight and man's than a spiritual apostate, a renegade Christian. It is put at a far distance from God's presence, buried from sight, lost as an outcast thing, hidden among heathenish scenes, as if belonging more to them than to God.

III. The damaging effects of separation from God. "After many days" (ver. 6). The girdle was sought and brought back.

1. *God does not forget and forsake even the estranged soul.* "Yet doth He devise means whereby His banished be not expelled from Him" (2Sam. xiv. 14).

2. *The recovered soul is found grievously damaged by his banishment.* "The girdle was *marred;*" the ship had sprung a leak hopelessly; the rift was in the lute silencing the harmony; the rot was at the heart. Never again would the old joy in God, the old love and zeal, return. A faithless soul loses what never again can be recovered. Childhood never comes back again!

3. *From a reclaimed soul no profit can accrue to God.* Saved, indeed, but no power left for service. A rescued life, but impotent to recall others, or commend the gospel. A disabled and dispirited army the captain refuses to use again on the field. The coward spirit is never more trusted. God cannot wear as a "praise" (ver. 11) the girdle which has lost its beauty. Only the faithful and the pure can glorify Him. "*Hold that fast* which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." "No man having put his hand to the plough, and *looking back*, is fit for the kingdom of God." "*Profitable for nothing.*" "Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savour, it is good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men" (Matt. v. 13).

Ver. 7. *Comments:* "THE GIRDLE WAS ROTTED." "This showed that the Jews should in that country lie rotting, as it were, in baseness, and servility, and in together many years; so that God might justly have left them there still in misery, as a man leaves his rotten girdle to become dung."—*Trapp.*

"MANY DAYS." The length of time was required to afford time for the girdle to become spoiled and unfit for use. To that condition the Jews had been reduced by the corrupting idolatries of the heathen. They had *disqualified themselves* for acting as witnesses for Jehovah; as the only true God, and, like a castaway girdle, they were to be humbled and rejected."—*Henderson.*

"By the 'many days' are signified the seventy years' captivity."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 9. *Theme:* GOD'S SPOLIATION OF PRESUMPTUOUS PRIDE. There may be a *reverent pride*, based on gratitude and joyous appreciation of God's distinguishing mercies. There may also be an *arrogant pride*—"Stand off, I am holier than thou!" Equally possible is a *self-reliant pride*—sufficient of ourselves: "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" Likewise, the *pride of carnal assurance:* fortified in self-esteem, satisfaction with one's own goodness and merits. But this "*Great pride* of Jerusalem" was a vaunting, boastful, arrogant pride; a glorying in spiritual possessions and privileges, which they were nevertheless abusing — the pride of presumption: and "the presumptuous soul do I hate."

I. Spiritual presumption can only assert itself where true piety has declined. Piety is lowly. Loss of solemn reverence makes room for arrogance. Then the soul presumes, vaunts itself, makes even religion an occasion for self-glorying. God's grace becomes the pedestal for self-exaltation.

II. Spiritual presumption is peculiarly offensive to a God who loves truth. Pride is a mocking pretence. Of what have the best of men to be proud? "What have we that we have not *received?*" This pride assumes and arrogates to ourselves the credit of what God has given. His is the glory, not

ours. This wrongs Him, and boasts in a lie.

III. Spiritual presumption leads to the most heinous abuse of sacred privileges. Holy trusts should make those who possess them holier, *ergo*, humbler, more grateful, and more devoted. But pride reverses all this: the soul dwarfs amidst surrounding magnificence; becomes degraded by the abuse of exalting privileges. This perverts and outrages the Divine endowments and blessings.

IV. Spiritual presumption will assuredly court Jehovah's withering contempt. Dig a hole and bury it! as a rotten, loathsome thing. "*Thus* will I mar the pride." He poureth contempt upon princes! God has resources, appalling in their efficacy, for humbling the arrogant and withering the proud. Think what he did to these Jews! Cast them as a filthy girdle into a "hole." We may well fear to court His contempt. See what befel the proud Nebuchadnezzar—sank into a mere beast. Oh how, in life's end, will all our vanity mock us, and our presumption turn upon us with tortures! (See Addenda, "*Pride Abased.*")

Ver. 10. Herein is shown to what their "*pride*" led them—

i. Disregard of Divine messages.

ii. Indulgence of their own wilful inclinations.

iii. Enthronement of debasing idolatries: *ergo*, the dethronization of Jehovah in their *hearts* and their *worship*.

Ver. 10. *Theme:* "GOOD FOR NOTHING."

The most dutiful are unprofitable servants, doing no more than their duty. But how few could honestly declare of themselves, "I have done all I could." If the best are imperfect, what can be said of the cold-hearted and indolent? Still worse, far worse, is the case of those who are gone out of the way (Rom. iii. 12). This verse symbolizes God's people in their idolatry and consequent captivity. We proceed to—

I. Dwell upon a painful fact. "They were His own, a peculiar people to Him, a kingdom of priests who had access to Him above all other nations." To them were sent lawgivers, priests, psalmists, and prophets. To them were committed the oracles of God. To them were given a Divine directory and method of worship. Yet were they "good for nothing." All was done for the vineyard which could be done, yet it brought forth *wild* grapes.

II. Point out the cause of their sad condition. They became an evil people, as is shown in this verse. Disobedient and hardhearted.

1. *They refused to hear the word of the Lord.* (See notes on ver. 3.)

2. *They followed the imagination of their hearts.* When a man will not hear God, he has generally resolved to have his own way. He puts fancy for faith, and self for God.

3. *They became idolaters.* Forsaking the true they follow the false. Man *must* worship, even it be but the fancy of his own brain, or work of his own hand. Man must serve, but often chooses the wrong master. The value of a man or a nation is in proportion to the truth possessed, and the degree of obedience rendered to it. The unfaithful are good for nothing.

III. Show what they might have been as a people.

1. They might have been *separated from* the nations as being peculiarly the people of God.

2. They might have been *before* the nations for the glory of Jehovah, as opposed to idols. "For a name, and for a praise," &c.

3. They might have been *among* the nations as examples and witnesses, setting forth the beneficial influences of true religion.

IV. Proclaim some universal truths.

1. *Refusing to hear God's word is proof that the people are an evil people.*

2. *An evil people will substitute a false worship* for that which is true.

3. *A false worship will produce and foster an erroneous religious life.*

4. *A people walking according to the imagination of their own hearts must be useless* to themselves, to the world, to the Church, or to God.—*W. Whale.*

Ver. 10, 11. *Theme:* GOD'S GIRDLE. Not now shall we conclude that Israel

and Judah were God's girdle. They formerly clave unto Him, but, at the time referred to by the prophet, had gone away to idols. Because of their sin God sent them into captivity until they were reduced to extreme weakness.

Observe—

I. That Israel and Judah clave unto Jehovah as a girdle to the loins of a man (ver. 11). Unto His *person* for favour. Unto His *word* for direction and teaching. Unto His *promise* for encouragement. Unto His *worship* for devotion.

II. That Israel and Judah were then a praise and glory to Jehovah (ver. 11). A girdle of strength and honour before the nations.

1. As opposed to the idolatries of the world.

2. As expressing obedience to Divine law.

3. As exhibiting the beneficial effects of true religion.

III. That Israel and Judah became faithless and disobedient (ver. 10).

1. An evil people, refusing to hear the Word.

2. A stubborn people, going their own way.

3. A deluded people, in vain imaginations.

4. An idolatrous people, like the nations less favoured, going after other gods to serve and worship them.

IV. That Israel and Judah becoming faithless, became also weak and worthless. Went from prominence to obscurity. Went from freedom to captivity. Went, in general, from privilege to punishment.—*W. Whale.*

Ver. 11. *Theme:* GOD'S GLORIOUS PURPOSE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

Keeping still to the allegory of "the girdle," there seems here a reference to the holy girdle of Aaron (Exod. xxviii. 8), which, together with his sacred garments, should be "for a glory and a beauty" (ver. 2).

I. How determinedly Jehovah makes them His own. The form of sentence is intensitive: "I have *caused* to *cleave* unto Me," &c.

1. *By the mighty working of His grace* God united them to Himself. It was *His* act, not theirs, "*I* caused;" a *determined* act, "*caused:*" a *constraining* act, "caused to *cleave.*" (Comp. Eph. i. 19.)

2. *Into living connection with His own Person* He bound them. Fastened them on, as a girdle, to Himself. Not merely drew them to believe in, or serve Him; but to a personal union. He was *Israel's God.*

II. What exalted aims He cherishes on their behalf. He designs for them that they be established and known as His—

1. *In covenant relationship:* "for a *people.*" Israel, His peculiar treasure. "What are the *riches of the glory of His inheritance* in the saints" (Eph. i. 18).

2. *As a witness of Him to the world:* "for a *name.*" He desired to be known among the nations by the name, "The God of Israel" (1 Chron. xvii. 24). He purposed to win *renown* among the peoples by His dealings with Israel and Judah.

3. *To rejoice in His goodness:* "for a *praise.*" They were to be glad in the Lord, a joyous people, praising Him for signal blessings, a psalm sounding through the world, commending Him to others by their joyous piety.

4. *Contributing to His honour:* "for a *glory.*" An ornament, a decoration,—as was the beautiful girdle, studded with gems, to the wearer. (Comp. Ezek. xvi. 14.)

Alas! a disobedient heart, "*they would not hear,*" changed and desolated all! Sin robs God of all the happiness and honour He would find in man, and robs man of all the blessedness and spiritual wealth he might realize in God.

Ver. 12–14. *Theme:* THE WINE OF THE WRATH OF GOD.

This symbol supplements the former and teaches another part of needed truth. It is less dramatic in its form, but not less definite as a threatening of judgment. If we notice the general truths contained in the portion, there can be no difficulty in applying them to this or any other particular case.

Observe, then—

I. That every man is being fitted a

vessel to honour or dishonour, to good or evil.

II. That every man will ultimately be filled to his utmost capacity by good or evil, according to his spiritual state.

III. That the process of adaptation is being carried on by loyalty or disobedience to truth and God.

IV. That where all are evil every one will be injurious to the other. This will make a hell. The reverse of this is true also. Where all are good, each one is a blessing to the other. This goes far to make a heaven.

V. That God, who is love, has a time for severity as well as a time for mercy. "I will not pity," &c., &c.

VI. That if God help not, none can aid effectually. If God save not there is no salvation in any other.—*W. Whale.*

Comments—

Ver. 12. "EVERY BOTTLE SHALL BE FILLED WITH WINE." "Every earthen flagon (comp. xlviii. 12)—the inhabitants of Jerusalem, her kings, her priests and prophets, will be filled with the wine of the intoxicating beverage of God's wrath (see xxv. 15; Isa. xxviii. 7, li. 17; Ezek. xxiii. 31; Ps. lx. 3, lxxv. 8), given them as a punishment for the pride, and cruelty, and impiety, which they drank greedily as wine. (Comp. Rev. xiv. 8, xviii. 3), where the Harlot drinks the wine of her own fornication and gives it to others, and intoxicates herself and them with it (xvii. 2, xviii. 6); and, therefore, God gives her the cup of His wrath, and she reels under it."—*Wordsworth.*

"Wine they loved well, and a great vintage they now expected. They shall have it, saith God; but of another nature than they look for."—*Trapp.*

"They were like bottles; though God had indeed chosen them for an excellent use, yet, forgetful of their frailty, they had marred their own excellency, so that they were no longer of any use, except that God would inebriate them with giddiness, and also with calamities."—*Calvin.*

"DO WE NOT CERTAINLY KNOW THAT EVERY BOTTLE," &c.

"An instance of sceptical mocking."—*Wordsworth.*

"This they seem to speak insolently and jeeringly—*q.d.* You should tell us some news!"—*Trapp.*

"Then shall the hearers take this prophecy in scorn, and say, What wonders are these thou tellest us? As if we knew not that the use of bottles is to be filled with wine."—*Bp. Hall.*

Ver. 13. "THEN SHALT THOU SAY, THUS SAITH THE LORD." The very solemn way in which the explanation of the symbol is introduced is in striking contrast with the frivolity of the people.—*Speaker's Com.*

"FILLED WITH DRUNKENNESS." When the wine is in, the wit and wisdom and virtue are out. Like drunken men, they shall be *full of confusion in their counsels, sick of all their enjoyments*, shall fall into a slumber, and be *utterly unable to help themselves;* like men who have drunk away their reason, they shall *be at the mercy*, and *expose themselves to the contempt* of all about them. And this shall be the condition, not of some only among them (if any had been sober *they might have helped the rest*), but all, even kings, priests, prophets, and inhabitants would be indulgent of their lusts and deprived of their senses.—*Henry.*

"Not with giddiness as of drunken men staggering (Isa. xix. 14), but with the impotence of men whose minds are stricken with the wrath of God (Ps. ix. 3; Isa. lx. 17)."—*Speaker's Com.*

"The Jews, without regard to rank, office, or position, were all to be involved in one common ruin."—*Henderson.*

"EVEN THE KINGS THAT SIT UPON DAVID'S THRONE." Four kings in succession were overthrown in the fall of Jerusalem.

Ver. 14. "DASH ONE AGAINST ANOTHER:" shattering them as vessels. "Vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction."

Civil war is hereby foreshadowed.—*Hitzig.*

Rather, a collision of parties in the state, resulting in mutual confusion and confutation.

"The Midianites (Judges vii. 12) and

the Philistines (1 Sam. xiv. 20), who exterminated each other, were also seized by a spirit of intoxication. If not in this sense, yet in that of mutual hatred, reciprocal oppression, and injury in general."—*Naeg.*

Ver. 15. *Theme:* ATTENTION TO GOD'S WORD. "Hear ye, and give ear; . . for the Lord hath spoken."

The Bible worthy of attention and study as—(1) An ancient book, dealing with the history of the human race—(2) A book full of literary beauty—(3) A book of great power and influence. Here attention is claimed because it is the Word of God.

I. How should we attend to it? 1. With reverence. 2. In faith. 3. Diligently, earnestly. 4. Intelligently. 5. Intending to be governed by it. 6. Prayerfully.

II. There is here an implied neglect. The exhortation, and especially the mention of pride, implies this. Men neglect the Bible, because—1. They are filled with other things. 2. They do not know its worth. 3. They do not apprehend the bearing it may have on their well-being. 4. They are not willing to submit to its teachings.

III. Why should we attend? Our text gives the paramount reason—God has spoken. Consider—

1. The dignity and glory of the Lord.
2. His wisdom and knowledge.
3. His beneficence, interest, and love.
4. He speaks to us of matters in which we have the deepest interest.

Learn—

1. To read the Bible regularly. 2. To treasure it in the heart. 3. To honour it in your life.—*E. Jerman.*

Theme: REVELATION.

Given at different times, and by various methods, such as visions, dreams, inspiration or rapture of soul, and direct vocal communication. Its object, to reveal God, to instruct and guide man. Here we have—

I. The fact of revelation. "The Lord *hath* spoken."

II. The authority of revelation. "The *Lord* hath spoken."

III. The appeal of revelation. "Hear ye," &c.

IV. The purpose of revelation. To rebuke for sin. To save from judgment. To make known the way of mercy. To direct true souls into paths of progress and happiness. To announce Jehovah's wrath against all wrongdoing.—*W. Whale.*

Theme: PRIDE THE GREAT HINDRANCE TO THE RECEPTION OF GOD'S WORD. "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken."

I. Pride will not seek the knowledge of God.

1. Pride will not brook a rival.
2. Is unwilling to be taught.
3. Is unwilling to use the means of knowledge.
4. Is unwilling to pray.

II. Pride will not seek the favour of God.

III. Pride will not seek likeness to God.

IV. Pride will not seek communion with God.—*Payson* on Ps. x. 14.

"Both the symbols—girdle and vessel—were of a nature very humiliating to the national self-respect: but the prophet warns them against letting any such feeling interfere with the humble reception of the words of God.—*Speaker's Com.*

"Here is good counsel given, to *humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.* If they will *harken and give ear*, this is that which God has to say to them, *Be not proud.* This was one of the sins for which God had a controversy with them (ver. 9); let them mortify and forsake this sin, and God will let fall His controversy.

i. Be not proud when God speaks to you by His prophets. Do not think yourselves too good to be taught. Be not (a) *scornful*, (b) *wilful.* Let not your hearts rise against *the word*, nor slight *the messengers* that bring it to you.

ii. Be not proud when God is coming forth against you in His providence. Be not (a) *secure when He threatens;* (b) *impatient when He strikes.* Pride is at the bottom of both.

It is the great God who has spoken: 1. Whose authority is incontestable: 2. Whose power is irresistible; therefore bow to what He says."—(Comp. *Henry.* See "*Noticeable Topics*" on this verse.)

Vers. 16, 17. *Theme:* RENDERING GOD GLORY BY REPENTANCE. Giving glory to God is opposed to *being proud;* which is self-glory.

"Jeremiah was as constant a preacher of repentance as Paul, and after him Augustine, were of the free grace of God. The impenitent person robbeth God of His right, the penitent man *sarcit injuriam Deo irrogatam*, seemeth to make some kind of amends to God, whom he had wronged, by restoring Him His glory, which he had run away with, whilst he putteth himself into the hands of justice, in hope of mercy."—*Trapp.*

"The phrase, *to give glory to Jehovah*, when used in reference to such as had incurred guilt, means to acknowledge the justice of God in the infliction of deserved punishment (Josh. vii. 19)."—*Hend.*

"How, indeed, can we ascribe *glory to God*, except by acknowledging Him to be the fountain of all wisdom, justice, and power, and especially by *trembling at His sacred Word?* Whosoever, then, does not fear and reverence God, whosoever does not believe His word, he robs Him of His glory."—*Calvin.*

I. Counsel. "Give glory to the Lord."

1. Because the Lord's glory is man's good.

2. Because *in them* that glory might appear (ver. 11).

3. Because by them that glory might be obscured.

II. Warning. "Before He cause darkness," &c.

1. Fading light. No clear vision when God is not glorified.

2. Stumbling feet. No power of progress unless for God's glory.

3. Bewildering night. Captivity. All lost.

III. Pleading. "But if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep," &c.—His "*Lamentations.*"

1. It is the counsel of tender love. For love's sake.

2. It is the counsel of utter unselfishness. "For Christ's sake."—*Rev. John Farren.*

See *Noticeable Topics* on these verses. Also *Addenda* on ver. 16, *Repentance glorifying God;* and on ver. 17, *Lamenting pride.*

Ver. 16. *Comments:* "HE CAUSE DARKNESS." The night of affliction. Light is the emblem of joy; and happy times are expressed by bright and pleasant days; as, on the contrary, troubles and calamities are represented by the night and darkness, when everything looks melancholy and dismal. — *W. Lowth.*

"STUMBLE UPON THE DARK MOUNTAINS:" Before the time comes when ye shall be forced to fly by night upon the mountains for fear of your enemies. —*W. Lowth.*

"Here is a double metaphor: Judah is not walking upon the safe highway, but upon dangerous mountains: and already the dusk is closing around her. While then the light still serves, let her return unto her God."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 16. *Theme:* WANING LIGHT FORESHADOWING UTMOST GLOOM.

God can darken all hope and joy. Life's gloom is admonitory. We should seek the Lord when shadows gather, and thus turn darkness into dawn.

I. Total darkness will overtake those who refuse God glory. It will gather more thickly and intensely around them, till it become dense. Note the strengthening imagery: "*Cause darkness*" — "*shadow of death*" — "*gross darkness:*" it indicates that the awful gloom increases upon the godless soul, ending in utter-most night. "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

II. Fading light, denoting the decline of spiritual opportunity. *Action must be quick*, for "darkness" sets in. Repent, "give glory to God, before He cause darkness," ere His judgments deepen upon you, and the gloom hides all way of escape.

1. *Attempts to escape will desperately fail.* "Your feet will stumble on dark mountains." The way of deliverance would be hidden from their eyes, and their own efforts would only lead to misery and defeat.

2. *The shadows counsel speedy return to God.* Before the dread darkness environs us, it is our wisdom to seek

God, bow before Him in reconciliation, and glorify Him by submission.

III. Delusive hopes will perish in the terrible gloom.

1. *No light will return when once that darkness falls on souls.* Impenitent sinners may "look for light;" for amelioration of woe, for escape from judgment, but light will not come.

2. *Deepest terrors will finally overwhelm the godless.* God will "turn it into the shadow of death," appalling horror and despair: and "make it gross darkness," which no ray of hope or relief will pierce. Those who, when the fourth vial was outpoured, "*repented not to give God glory*," were, with the next vial, overwhelmed with "darkness," and filled with agony (Rev. xvi. 9, 10).

The literal meaning of the metaphor is that there was nigh at hand a most dreadful vengeance, except the Jews in time anticipated it, and submitted themselves to God. "Seek righteousness, seek meekness, it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger" (Zeph. ii. 3).

(See *Addenda* on ver. 16. *Stumble upon the dark mountains*).

Ver. 17. *Theme:* BITTER WEEPING OVER HARDENED TRANSGRESSORS.

The burdened heart finds relief in tears. And God is not unmindful of the grief of holy commiseration. Such tears are more pleading and potent than prayers: they express "groanings which cannot be uttered." "Thou wilt put all my tears into Thy bottle"—precious are they to God.

I. Men's wilfulness in sin occasions heaviest sorrow to God's messenger. "If ye will not hear it," &c. Ministers know something of the "terrors of the Lord," and the preciousness of souls, and, therefore, feel bitterest grief over the obstinate, who put salvation from them. Christians ought to be keenly affected by the guilt of others; and to feel the prevailing rejection of God as a personal distress.

II. Melancholy justification is supplied for such holy grief.

1. *Defiant pride*, in repudiating God's word.

2. *Desolating exile* of God's cherished flock. Two distinct aspects: *man's hardened iniquity*—a sad fact to contemplate; *God's kingdom dishonoured*—for it was a discreditable incident that His flock should be carried away captive. And over human guilt and God's sullied honour we have still sufficient justification for grief. When our work and word fail, we can still weep and pray in private.

III. Sorrowful tears have a benignant purpose to serve.

1. *In prayerful retirement* they may be poured out before God, in plaintive supplication for sinners. When preaching effects no good, we can *weep in secret* for the hardened; and our tears shall be a holy libation to God. "*My soul* shall weep in *secret places* for your pride."

2. *In open lamentation* they may be shed over sinners who will not weep for themselves. Hearts may be touched by a preacher's grief who would not feel his words. They may *plead with men* as well as with God. "Mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Would not that sight of the broken-hearted prophet send a pang to many an unreflective observer? Tears may melt a feelingless heart, and holy grief allure a prodigal to God. *Weeping is the last resort of love.* "When He beheld the city, He wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known!"

(See *Addenda* on ver. 17. *Sorrowful tears.*)

Theme: THE PATHOS OF AN EARNEST SOUL. Jeremiah was not a mere official with a formal message, but a patriot and a devout lover of his fellow-men. Looking into the text, we note—

I. A fearful possibility. The Lord's flock captive.

II. A solitary hope. If they will hear the word of the Lord.

III. A faithful messenger. Jeremiah speaking God's word.

IV. A dreadful anticipation. If they will not hear.

V. A pathetic resolve. "If they will not hear, my soul shall weep."

APPLICATION: 1. To ministers—that they feel deep interest in the people, so as to weep over them, &c.

2. To people—that it is a question of

essential importance concerning which God speaks. That their treatment of the Divine Word will decide whether the future shall be captivity or prosperity and bliss.—*W. Whale.*

Vers. 18, 19. See homily on section, *supra.*

"When the enemies are at the gate, the plague in the city, and there is no escape, while human help there is none, then it is time when preachers may speak to their princes who are in error; at other times they would be esteemed insolent. . . . Sometimes God's witnesses are clothed with an authority which no one understands, but all feel."—*Zinzendorf.*

"They who are chosen to the office of teaching cannot faithfully discharge their duty except they boldly, and with intrepid spirit, dare to reprove both kings and queens; for the word of the Lord is not to be restricted to the common people, or men in humble life. This prophecy was, no doubt, very bitter to the king as well as to the common people; for the king and his mother thought they could not possibly be dethroned."—*Calvin.*

Ver. 20. *Theme:* THE LOST FLOCK DEMANDED OF THE FAITHLESS SHEPHERD.

God *expects* of those who were entrusted with the care of others due attention to their responsibilities. And God will *require their flock* at their hands; that they should return to Him, saying, "Behold me, and the children Thou hast given me!" or, as they to whom talents were entrusted returned to their Lord with the usury. Yes, and He will hold them accountable for what befalls the flock: "their blood will I require at thy hands."

Amazed at the depopulation of the surrounding cities, Jeremiah demands of *Jerusalem* an explanation of the desolations: or, demands of the State [for the pronoun is *fem.*], an explanation of the captivity and devastation of Judah. "What does this mean, that the flock is scattered which was entrusted to thee?"

I. Imminent perils jeopardise the defenceless flock.

1. *Foes are visible:* "Lift up your eyes and behold them!" Adversaries are clearly within sight, menacing the safety and weal of *society*, the peace and progress of the *Church*, the piety and happiness of the *family*, the integrity and honour of *commerce*, the healthful tone and influence of *literature*, the veracity and authority of *revealed truth and Christian doctrine.*

2. *Foes are advancing:* "they come from the north." Heathenish forces advance against our *sacred inheritances*—would rob Israel of her possession of *Canaan;* invade our *holy scenes*, besiege Jerusalem, and desecrate the *Temple* where God is worshipped, for no hallowed scene awes them away; assail our very *liberty*—intend to *conquer and capture the people*, to make souls their prey, and carry captive the helpless. For manifestly the "flock" is defenceless, when the rulers and shepherds "fear not God neither regard man." As indeed are our homes and liberties if they be not environed by the covenant care of God.

II. Solemn responsibility charged upon the heedless shepherds. "Where is the flock?" &c.

a. With which they had been put in trust: "given unto thee."

b. Which needed and merited faithful care: "thy beautiful flock."

c. Of whose safety God will require solemn account: "Where is the flock?" This is applicable to—

1. *Magisterial responsibility for the wellbeing of their people.* They must protect their subjects from invading evils, and care for the moral as well as physical good of those they govern.

2. *Parental responsibility for the career of their children. Where* are they? Trained in "the good and right way," led after Jesus, guided into the Church of Christ? Or wandering into worldly scenes, amid snares and sophistries? God will want to know "where" they are at the end of their life on earth, when we appear before Him to give account of our stewardship.

3. *Ministerial responsibility for the salvation of those they taught.* Have they watchfully tended the flock, been faithful and dutiful shepherds? Where are the souls to whom you ministered the word of redemption, "over whom the Holy Ghost made you overseer?"

When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, He will require their souls of those who were put in charge of the gospel. (See *Noticeable Topic* on this verse.)

Ver. 21. *Theme:* WHAT WILT THOU SAY WHEN HE SHALL PUNISH THEE.

Time coming when God would call Jewish nation to awful account. God has solemnly threatened the wicked with punishment. When summoned to His bar, "what wilt thou say?" What reason allege against justice of thy doom?

I. Reflect on that change of circumstances which will be favourable to a correct judgment.

1. *The infidelity which now blinds your minds will then be removed.* You will see there is a God, your duty on earth, your guilt in ignoring Him.

2. *The mission of Christ will then be understood.* Then see the infinite evil your sins wrought on Calvary.

3. *The "opened books" will show record of all your sins, God's dealings with you,* &c., making a "revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

4. *Eternity will be laid open to your view,* the glories of heaven, the horrors of doom.

5. *The infinite and eternal interests which God's law was appointed to protect,* and against which your sins waged eternal war, will then stand displayed.

6. *Sin will then be seen as in raging hostility to the whole creation;* against God, &c.

7. *Nothing will then divert attention, or excite false hopes, or offer excuses.* Everything will then burst upon you marked with eternity and infinity. Who can describe the emotions of that day?

II. Examine the several pleas which may be supposed to offer themselves then to thought.

1. Will you say that *you meant no evil?* But it will appear how your selfish heart opposed God, &c.

2. That *your sins effected no serious results?* But they have wrought immeasurable evils; crucified Christ &c., and perhaps destroyed souls.

3. *That eternal punishment is too severe for temporary sins?* The sin of an hour can fix lasting misery, and must fall on the culprit himself.

4. *That your sins being finite, do not merit infinite punishment?* You sinned against an infinite God, therefore your punishment should be infinite, though it is finite in degree to comport with your nature.

5. *Will you plead, You are no worse than others?* There was no obligation to do evil with the multitude. God's law bound you individually.

6. *Will you say, You had strong temptations?* They were sent to test your obedience. They showed you loved your idols more than God. Your depravity gave *them* power.

7. *Will you say, Those wiser than you betrayed you into errors of doctrine?* You had the Word of *God,* the truth was plainly written there.

8. *Will you plead, You had good desires and did good?* In God's account you had no good desire, and did no good act. This *will* appear against all the unregenerate.

9. *Will you say, You did not know God?* God was before you in His works, and more gloriously in His Word. Your ignorance arose from your unbelief—"He that believeth not shall be damned."

10. *Will you say, The Holy Spirit did not strive?* Had you heeded His voice you would not have been in this condition now.

11. *Will you say, Ministers and friends did not warn you?* Say not so. They would have snatched you from destruction, but they could not.

12. *Will you charge the blame on God—say He gave you passions which betray you?* All false. He gave you no passions to lead you astray. Self-love changed all, and you alone are to blame.

13. *Will you plead, You could not love God, could not repent and believe, nor change your heart?* This is saying your heart would yield to no motives; and if God may not punish that, He can no more exercise moral government.

14. *Will you say, You were excluded by God's foreknowledge and decree?* If God foresaw you would reject the gospel, did that compel you to do so. You rejected it as freely as if it had not *been* foreknown.

15. *Will you say, It is hard for a creature to be brought into existence without his own consent, and then to be made eternally miserable?* Who art thou that repliest against God? If He may not create intelligent beings, and punish them when they sin, He has no right to maintain moral government.

16. *Will you say, Why did He suffer me to sin?* If the penalty of the law was not executed, it would have been annihilated, and the law turned into advice. Could not infinite Wisdom judge as well as you?

17. *Will you say, There is no need of such severity, God could make the universe happy without your destruction?* Can you look through eternity, and judge better than God? Or teach Him what is best for public good? Abandon these charges, fall down at the feet of Christ, and cast your soul on Him. Come, "for all things are ready." God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are ready. Are you ready? Come.—*Anon.*

Vers. 21, 22. *Theme:* GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THE FAITHLESS VINDICATED.

I. **The tyranny of usurpers is explained.** Why are God's people found in a state of captivity—does it not imply that He has failed to guard them? No! "*Thou hast taught them,*" &c. By coquetting with foreigners, thou hast given them advantages over thee, which they have used for thy conquest. (See *Lit. Crit.* on verse.) If we court the friendship of sinners, we lay ourselves open to subjugation, and invite them to seize the unwary prey. Hezekiah, by showing the ambassadors his treasures, thus tempted the Babylonish king to plunder.

II. **The misery of the vanquished is justified.** "Shall not sorrow take thee, as a woman in travail?" Poignant will be the anguish; and not a reason will the sufferers be able to adduce why sorrows *shall not* take them. *Self-condemnation*, the consciousness of merited misery, is "the worm that dieth not, the fire that cannot be quenched."

III. **The afflictions of judgment threatened.** "What wilt thou say when *He shall punish thee?*" There is still *an interval of suspended judgment.* But the unsheathed sword will *assuredly fall* on the impenitent.

IV. **The questionings of self-vindication silenced.** "And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me?" There is reason to doubt whether the sufferer will *dare to ask* such a question, for he will know the reason all too well: "*if* thou say." Even if he venture on such a self-answered inquiry, it will *not dare utter itself*, only rising in silence, as being ashamed of being heard: "say in *thine heart.*" Yet, should any ask for the justification of the Divine afflictions, here it is—"*For the greatness of thine iniquity.*"

V. **The degradation of apostates is depicted.** "Thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare." (See *Lit. Crit.* on verse). This public shame (see also ver. 26) prefigures the confusion and contempt which will be openly poured upon all them that forget God and dishonour Him by their iniquitous disregard of His claims and His grace.

Ver. 23. *Theme:* ESCAPING THE THRALDOM OF EVIL HABITS.

I. **The great difficulty of reforming vicious habits.** This difficulty of changing a bad course arises—

1. *From the general nature of habits.*

2. *From the particular nature of bad habits.*

3. *From the natural and judicial consequences* of the great progress and long continuance of a bad course.

II. **This difficulty is not desperate** There is some ground of hope and encouragement.

1. There is left even in the worst of men *a natural sense of the evil and unreasonableness of sin.*

2. Very bad men, when they have any thought of becoming better, are *apt to conceive some good hopes of God's grace and mercy.*

3. Who knows *what man, thoroughly roused and startled, may resolve to do?*

4. *The grace and assistance of God,* when sincerely sought, *is never to be* despaired of.—*Tillotson.*

Suggestions arranged from *Lange*—

1. *A comfortless perspective* (ver. 23).

ii. *Yet with God nothing is impossible* (Matt. xix. 26).

iii. *Purification, though slow and successive, can be effected.* The conclusion of ver. 27 shows this. In purification—

1. We obtain a point of support without ourselves (Archimedes).

2. And a new principle of life in Christ Jesus. (See *Addenda* on verse 23, *Inveterate Habits.*)

Theme: THE POWER OF EVIL HABITS.

We take notice of particular evil *acts*, but are strangely insensible of an evil *principle* operating within us. This principle shows itself in daily *habits*. Experience shows that our habits of sin are not easily broken.

I. The power of sin, as inherent in our nature.

1. *It pervades all our faculties*, whether of mind or body. Understanding blinded, will perverse, affections earthly, conscience stupefied, &c. (Rom. iii. 12–15; vi. 13).

2. *It finds in us nothing to counteract its influence.* Neither reason nor conscience perform their office in opposing this evil principle. (See Rom. vii. 18.)

3. *It receives aid from everything around us.* "All that is in the world, lust of flesh, lust of eyes, and pride of life," are confederates, and solicit us to sin.

4. *It conceals its influence under specious names.* What will it not commend under the idea of *amusement*, and sanction as *conviviality* and *good breeding*?

II. Its power, as confirmed and augmented by evil habit.

1. *Its odiousness is diminished.* We see to what lengths wicked men will proceed when once the restraints of conscience and remorse are broken through; *glory in their shame* (Phil. iii. 18, 19).

2. *Its power is strengthened.* Man may so accustom himself to anger, intemperance, impurity, or sloth, as to become powerless to resist temptation (2 Pet. ii. 14; Prov. xxvi. 14; Matt. xix. 24).

3. *Its opportunities for exercise are multiplied.* Habits call around us persons and temptations subservient to their indulgence. Thus, "sin most easily *besets them*" (Prov. vii. 22, 23).

4. *The powers whereby it should be resisted are destroyed.* Conscience becomes "seared" (1 Tim. iv. 2); mind hardened against fear (Heb. iii. 13). Hence "wax worse and worse" (2 Tim. iii. 13.)

5. *Everything good is by it put at an unapproachable distance.* "How shall they *do good?*" &c. If the "putting off of the old man" be so difficult, what hope is there of "putting on the new?" (Eph. iv. 22–24). Learn—

a. *Your need of converting grace.* "Must be born again."

b. *The difference between sin and grace, as affected by our habits.* Habits of sin will augment of themselves; not so with habits of grace. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Yet the Lord is able *to hold you up, and "His strength is made perfect in weakness."—Simeon.*

Theme: THE ALARMING POWER OF SIN.

This passage, like some others in the sacred writings, is not to be interpreted in the strictest sense; of the same description is the declaration of Christ, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." And yet such men are saved, though the difficulties in the way of their salvation are many and great. So, in some instances, are men long accustomed to do evil diverted from their courses of iniquity. But this is not usual. It is a truth which should affect the minds of every class, that the long-continued impenitence of men augments the difficulties in the way of their salvation.

I. The habits of men are strengthened and confirmed by indulgence.

II. The influence of this world, as men advance in life, usually becomes more perplexing, and a greater hindrance to their conversion.

III. As years increase men become less interested in the subject of religion, and more obdurate and averse to any alteration in their moral character.

IV. The thought of multiplied and long-continued transgression is very

apt to discourage all attempts at repentance.

V. There is awful reason to apprehend that God will leave men of this description to perish in their sins.

APPLICATION—

1. *What is the admonition which it addresses to the aged?*

2. *Our subject addresses those who are in middle life.*

3. *It addresses the young.—Dr. D. Spring.*

Comments—

"Custom in sin is a very great hindrance to conversion from sin."—*Henry.*

"Learned men in our age do not wisely refer to this passage, when they seek to prove that there is *no free-will* in man; for it is not simply the nature of man that is spoken of here, but the habit that is contracted by long practice. Aristotle, a strong advocate of free-will, confesses that it is not in man's power to do right, when he is so immersed in his own vices as to have lost a free choice (7, *Lib. Ethicon*), and this also is what experience proves."—*Calvin.*

"Inveterate habits are justly regarded as a second-nature; but, being moral in their character, *instead of extenuating*, they *aggravate the guilt* of those who are the subjects of them. Strong, therefore, as is the physical reference here made, it can with no propriety be employed in support of the physical impossibility of moral reformation."—*Henderson.*

See *Noticeable Topics* on this verse.

Ver. 24. *Comments*—

"SCATTER THEM:" "This was no small aggravation of their misery that they should be thus severed one from another. So the persecutors of primitive times relegated and confined the poor Christians to isles and mines, where they could not have access one to another for mutual comfort and support, as Cyprian complaineth."—*Trapp.*

Ver. 25. "THY LOT, THE PORTION OF THY MEASURES:" The portion I have measured out to thee (Job xx. 29; Ps. xi. 6); as by line and measure I formerly allotted thee an inheritance in Canaan.

"IN FALSEHOOD:" *i.e.*, in false gods and foreign usurpers.

Ver. 26. Their punishment should answer to their crime. In spiritual harlotry with heathen gods they had exposed themselves to others; God would expose them to shame and ignominy before the eyes of heathen foes.

Ver. 27. *Theme:* JUDAH'S CLEANSING—A FORLORN HOPE.

"*Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?*"

I. Purification deliberately refused. "Not be made clean." (See on ver. 1: "Put it not in water.") As yet Judah delighted in her defilement.

II. Purification extremely difficult. "Shall it once be?" These words explain ver. 23. Repentance on the part of Judah seemed to have become a moral impossibility; therefore cleansing could not be effected. No cleansing where there is no penitence.

III. Purification remotely possible. "*When* shall it be?" In the far distant future the prospective possibility opens to the Seer. It cannot *yet*, or *soon* be. Nevertheless he cherishes the distant hope. His *patriotic love* leads him to this generous surmise. And his knowledge of the *patience and mercy of* Jehovah forbid him to despair.

Theme: AN AFFECTIONATE EXPOSTULATION WITH JUDAH. "*Wilt thou not be made clean?*"

"Though it was adjudged next to impossible for them to be brought to do good (ver. 23), yet while there is life there is hope, and therefore still he reasons with them to bring them to repentance (ver. 27).

"i. *He reasons with them concerning the thing itself.* 'Wilt thou not be made clean?' Note, It is the great concern of those who are polluted by sin to be made clean by repentance and faith and an universal reformation. The reason why sinners are not made clean is that they will not be made clean; and therein they act unreasonably.

"ii. *Concerning the time of it.* 'When shall it once be?' Note,—It is an instance of the *wonderful grace of God*, that He desires the repentance and conversion of sinners, and *thinks the time long* till they are brought to relent; but

it is an instance of the *wonderful folly of sinners* that they put that off from time to time which is of such absolute necessity that, if it be not done some time, they are undone for ever. They do not say, they will never be cleansed, but, *not yet;* they will defer it to a more convenient season, but cannot tell us 'when it shall once be.'"—*Henry.*

Theme: CLEANSING POSSIBLE, YET REFUSED. "Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?"

Every impenitent sinner is involved in guilt and polluted with sin. God is willing to pardon, if he repent and believe the gospel. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." It is implied—

I. That it is possible for creatures involved in guilt and polluted with sin to obtain both pardon and purity. "Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?"

God is able to cleanse us from sin. Our own unwillingness greatly obstructs it, yet it is possible to obtain it.

1. It is possible to have our guilt removed, and to *be delivered from the consequences of sin.*

2. It is possible for us to be delivered from *the pollution of sin.*

II. It is supposed That many raise objections against this cleansing and the means appointed for it. "Wilt thou *not* be made clean?"

The unbelieving Jews objected to the charge of guilt brought against them by the prophet:

1. Some are *willing to be delivered from the consequences of sin, but not from its power.* Would willingly escape hell, but care not to live a holy life; would accept a free and full salvation, but are not ready to take up their cross to follow Christ.

2. Some are *willing to be cleansed outwardly, but not inwardly.* Many do not object to leave off some of their gross sins, but dislike what is internal and spiritual.

3. Some are *willing to be cleansed partly, but not entirely.* There are sins they cannot give up.

4. Some *raise objections to God's appointed methods for cleansing sins.* Object to the mediation of Christ as the ground of their hope: would prefer to do some good work for themselves. Not willing to be pardoned and sanctified in God's appointed way.

5. Some who *admit the importance of being cleansed, object to being cleansed yet;* "at once." Religion is important, but it is to be attended to at some future time.

III. That those who object to be cleansed render themselves liable to Divine judgment. The words are introduced with a *Woe.* "Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem!" Refusing pardon, they deserve judgment for their impenitence. So those under the gospel, who remain impenitent and ungodly, are exposed to the most awful judgment.

1. *Those who refuse to apply to the sacrifice of Christ have no way of mercy left to them.* "There is no other name under heaven," &c.

2. *Those who are not cleansed from sin must be excluded from heaven.* "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

3. *There is great danger if you are not cleansed yet, that you will remain and perish in your corruption.*—*Anon.*

Theme: MERCY'S APPEAL — "WILT THOU BE MADE CLEAN?" &c.

The favoured city under a ban—because of uncleanness—Divine offer of help the only hope. Mercy's appeal.

1. *Mercy's appeal is faithful,* convincing of sin, and commanding repentance.

2. *Mercy's appeal is humiliating.* Jerusalem is unclean and unable to make itself clean. Ungodly and without strength. Dependent on Divine love.

3. *Mercy's appeal is helpful.* God has made provision for cleansing. He is anxious to afford aid.

4. *Mercy's appeal is to the moral wish of man.* "Wilt thou?" &c.

5. *Mercy's appeal is effectual when man is made willing to be clean.*

Another method on same text—

I. The great need of the soul, cleansing.

II. The great helplessness of the soul, cannot cleanse itself.

III. The great grace of God. He has provided for cleansing, and offers to cleanse.

IV. The great drawback on our part. We do not naturally wish to be clean.

V. The great work of the ministry.
1. To bring home the feeling of guilt.
2. To ask the question of the text.
3. To direct to the cleansing fount.
4. To urge the importance of immediate application.—*W. Whale.*

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER XIII.

Topic: NEARNESS TO GOD DESTROYED BY SIN. (Vers. 1–11).

The sacred writers use the incidents of life and the symbolism of nature to inculcate truth. Christ did the same. Reason of this—(1.) Difficult to secure man's attention. (2.) Difficult to effect a lodgment of the truth in the heart. We have here a symbolic action, the burying, &c., of the girdle, intended to represent the nearness of the Jewish nation to God, and their alienation and destruction through sin.

Subject: NEARNESS TO GOD DESTROYED BY SIN.

I. Nearness to God.—1. These Jews were like a girdle bound upon the loins. Should have entwined themselves around God. So nations may be near—(1) In the great things that God had done for them. (2) In the covenant relation which He had entered into with them. (3) In the privileges which He had conferred upon them.

2. Man is near—(1) He is near by nature—created in God's image. (2) He is near to God's heart. (3) He is near in God's care over him. (4) He is near in the privileges of liberty, religion, knowledge, discipline, warning. (5) In a position to become eternally nearer by growing up into Christ. Entering into his fellowship. Entering into His palace above. (6) Brought near for God's glory (ver. 11).

II. His nearness destroyed by sin.—1. Sin is the destroyer of nations as well as individuals. The Jews destroyed by idolatry, lust, selfishness, pride.

2. As of nations so of individuals, sin will destroy them unless resisted and cast forth. Man in Paradise, Antediluvian world, Ahab, Haman, Lot, and Solomon almost.

3. This destruction is voluntary. The sinner is a suicide. (Ver 10, &c.).

4. God is represented as active in this destruction, *v.g.*—(1) Not that God deserts the sinner first. Pharaoh hardens his heart repeatedly before God is said to harden it. (2) But, when the measure of sin is full, God removes restraints, and sets in motion the agency of judgment.

5. This destruction will consist in—(1) Separation from God. (2) Utter corruption and rottenness.

Learn:—1. The terrible power of sin. 2. To guard against it as our chief enemy. —*E. Jerman.*

Topic: LIFE LESSONS—"BE NOT PROUD:" *Children's Sermon.* (Ver. 15.)

The lily of the valley, growing in the shade, and concealing itself in its own leaves, hints this same lesson. So does the nightingale, which "asks no witness to her song." Not need to describe *pride*, as if it were a new thing, or a rare curiosity, something which we must travel to ruins of Nineveh to find: as ancient as Garden of Eden, and common as thorns and thistles. It is exceedingly deceitful, escapes punishment by assuming a fictitious excellence, but in any form it is SIN! And, it is *enmity to God*, sets up idols where He should reign, and breeds envies, malice, &c.—things worthy of death. Its varieties are manifold: dwell on four of the chief—

I. There is **race** *pride.* Be *thankful* for good and pious ancestors: but what is there to *boast* of? Did we help to make them what they were; and are we as good as they? Jews were race proud: "We have Abraham to our father;" "We be the children of Abraham!" Not wrong to rejoice that our progenitors have been noble and holy, but to be arrogant and supercilious on account of this, and treat others disdainfully, is a ridiculous and detestable habit.

II. There is **face** *pride.* Lovely or manly features are not to be despised. Astonishing what favours they obtain, how many bolted doors they open. But if they foster pride, beauty is no longer beauty; it is despicable vanity. Remember how inferior outward appearance is to moral qualities, how empty it will leave you if disease despoils you of beauty; culture "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

III. There is **place** *pride.* Your position in society, fine house, carriage, rich dress, education, accomplishments—these do not render you better than those whose station is lower; not wiser, nobler, holier. You received them from God, "without money and without price;" be not haughty about them.

IV. There is **grace** *pride.* The worst sort of pride, pride in godliness! Mingles with our prayers, praises, charities, repentance, and tears. We estimate our devotions or services, and think them satisfactory, congratulate ourselves on them: we then offer incense to self instead of to God. Grace pride corrupts all grace.

"Be not proud" therefore, because—1. *We have nothing to be proud of:* we are poor, weak, dependent creatures. 2. *It is abhorrent to God*: it shuts Him away. "The proud He knoweth afar off." "God resisteth the proud." Fallen, depraved, perishing beings, *proud!* 3. *It is so unlike Christ.* Yet He was "altogether lovely;" knew everything, possessed everything, could do everything; yet "meek and lowly in heart." 4. *It is ruinous.* "Pride goeth before destruction." What warnings do Saul, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod offer! Watch against inducements to pride: bravely struggle with and subdue it.—*Rev. James Bolton, in "Family Treasury."*

Topic: GOD GLORIFIED IN THE FALL OF PRIDE. *Text: "Be not proud; give glory to the Lord your God. But if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and my eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive"* (vers. 15–17).

What a wonderful circumstance claims attention; the Everlasting God Himself pleads for an audience! "Hear ye and give ear, for the Lord hath spoken!" He tells of matters of vast importance; and, if you listen, through eternity you will thank God for having attended to His word.

I. Ask, What is it which stops people from hearing the voice of God? Text points to one special obstacle which is the last we should have thought possible—*pride.* When Jehovah *condescends* to speak to the heart of one so worthless, vouchsafes to offer us counsel of most momentous concern, the thing which bars our door against the entrance of Jesus, or deadens our ear to the sound of His voice, is this accursed thing called "*pride.*" Varied aspects assumed by pride:—

1. One form of "pride" is *shame.* Many kept from Christ because ashamed to come and give themselves up to Him. For fear of the paltry scorn, the momentary ridicule, the soul will risk eternity! You have to choose between shame *now* and shame *eternally.* Yet what is there to be ashamed of, that you should be kept from Christ? Rather there is cause for shame in being a sinner, impenitent, self-condemned!

2. There is the "pride" of *respectability and social position.* Hold apart from religion, because in the one way all must go without distinction. Yet who would not prefer the position of the vulgar beggar Lazarus to that of the respectable citizen Dives? What can justify in a lost sinner any high and vain thoughts of self?

3. There is the "pride" *that conceals a wound.* God's word has stricken the heart; healing and joy could be had if we humbly go to God, yet hide the grief and unrest within, from man and Heaven! Let this pride be broken down, and confession be made in the ears of your God.

4. There is the "pride" of *self-righteousness.* "Thank God, I am not like other men!" What say when before the Throne—that you were too good to accept the Gospel? Like the man without the wedding-garment, "you will be speechless." You might be clothed with the righteousness which is from God by faith; yet choosing your own, you are justly condemned!

II. Human pride must effectually be broken down.

1. *When pride is humbled,* and the man is crushed, then it is *God speaks.* And what does He say? Might expect—"Depart from Me, ye cursed!" Nay: "*Give glory to the Lord your God.*" *Your* God still, though turned your back upon Him, grieved Him, "would none of His ways." How make return for the wrong done, years wasted, opportunities lost? "Give glory to the Lord your God!"

2. *The contrite soul cannot realise its ability to glorify God.* A child of sin and sorrow, heart vile, sins crying out in reproach, all life a transgression, how can such an one glorify God? Note: A sinner can in one sense glorify God more than the brightest angel before His throne. From deepest woe He raises the soul to highest bliss and holiness! And while "there is joy in the presence of God over the sinner" repentant, the Most High is glorified in the achievement of wondrous grace! Give this glory to your God; broken down, powerless, self-despairing, cast yourself on His salvation.

3. *There is a desperate alternative;* that "you will not hear." By and by your feet will "stumble on the dark mountains." The day of disease will come; life will grow dim; the thin grandeur of a fading world will begin to pass away; all around the gloom will thicken, and on a dying world "*gross darkness,*" of unrelieved despair, will cover you. Then the last moment comes; one terrified "*look for light,*" but in vain; the soul is "carried away into captivity."

Tears for lost Jerusalem! Tears for a lost soul! "*Mine* eyes shall weep sore."—Aitken's "*Mission Sermons.*"

Topic: GOD'S CLAIM ON PARENTS. *Text:* "*Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?*" (ver. 20).

If kings are responsible for their subjects, teachers are for their scholars, parents are for their children.

I. What is here shown us respecting the flock. "The flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock."

1. *The flock is not yours:* not yours in proprietorship, but only yours in charge. It is "the flock *given thee.*" Mighty kings and tyrants have regarded subjects as their property: such have always wrought the ruin of their nation. The flock *belongs to God.* Israel was *His.* Children are peculiarly and specially God's. Authority over them is God's gift to parents; but He has a claim prior to yours. He continues His work of *Creation* in every child born. Its *existence* is wonderful. Much more wonderful are its *capacities*—physical, mental, social, spiritual!

2. *Christ highly estimates the flock.* "Thy *beautiful flock.*" "Whosoever shall receive one such child in My name, receiveth Me." Christian hospitality to a child is homage to God. Teachers, parents, the children of your charge constitute the flock that is given you; but you are not owners, only shepherds; and the obligation of shepherds is on you.

II. The responsibility of parents to whom God has entrusted His flock. The question will be put, sooner or later, "Where is the flock given thee?"

The great responsibility of parents is seen in this, that—

1. *They had to impart religious ideas.* At home the first principles are instilled: indeed, the child's mind is there made acquainted with the germs of all truth—sin,

forgiveness, righteousness, salvation, love human and Divine: all the ideas involved in religion.

2. *Parents represent to their children the character of the Invisible God.* Jewish kings substituted and were to represent the "King of kings." The Incarnate Jesus revealed "the Father in heaven." The gospel is a declaration of the Paternal Love. The parental relationship, therefore, represents God to the little ones; and they get their first ideas of Him from what their parents are.

3. *The inquiry "for the flock" will be addressed to parents.* God will ask of them "the beautiful flock" that made bright their homes. The time will come when this inquiry will be addressed from the judgment throne to parents. And among the gathered flocks in the "one fold" of heaven Christ will ask for *yours.* Alas! some will pass childless into the gates of heaven; bereaved not by death but by sin: themselves saved, their children lost. How will their ears receive the words, "Enter into the joy of your Lord"? Others will themselves be arrested at the throne; themselves rejected: and to them also will the inquiry come, "Where is thy flock?" Driven by thee into perdition—souls which were not thine, lambs whom Jesus came to save!

III. **The way in which this responsibility should be met.** If you would prepare to answer joyfully this question, set it before you as—

1. *A distinct purpose.* The *wish* for your children's salvation is not enough. Many good people are bad parents through lack of this *purpose* that their children shall be saved; a purpose registered in the sight of God over each child singly.

2. *Intense devotion* is necessary. Lukewarm piety will never enable a man to say at the throne, "Behold I and the children which God has given me!" To have converting power over your own children you must *love their souls,* and *hold them fast for God.*—Rev. Alden Davies, in "*Christian World Pulpit.*"

Topic: Custom in Sin Exceeding Dangerous. *Text:* "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil*" (ver. 23).

The miserable condition of sin is here exhibited in two branches, its defilement and its entanglement.

I. **The defilement of sin.** This is propounded from a double resemblance, *the blackness of the Ethiopian,* and the *spots of the leopard.* It is a polluting and deforming thing; whether man be regarded as corporeal or spiritual. Let it be beauty of the body, sin will cause loathsomeness; or beauty of mind, sin will take off the comeliness, and reduce it to coarseness and lust. Let men be what they may, yet if defiled by sin, they are so far forth very unlovely. They may not see their own ugliness, deformity, and filthiness in sin, as Ethiopians do not perceive their own blackness, nor are sensible of it; nay, they count their *blackness their greatest beauty;* yet this does not make them a whit the comelier.

To open this defilement and deformity which is in sin the more, we may take notice of four particulars:—

1. *The inherence of sin.* Like the blackness of the Ethiopian, and spots of leopard. "Behold I was *shapen* in iniquity," &c. (Ps. li. 5); "We are *by nature* children of wrath" (Eph. ii. 3); "The wicked are estranged *from the womb*" (Ps. lviii. 3). (1) This should *humble and abase us in consideration of our own vileness;* not lead us to excuse our sins. If sin were a thing which men fell into only by chance, as something adventitious to them, some palliation might be found; but its being inbred and natural makes it the more abominable. Let us prosecute the work of humility and deep contrition, being afflicted in soul on account of this natural deformity. And (2) we see here *what cause we have to desire that God would change our nature,* and bestow a new nature upon us.

2. *The monstrousness of sin.* As we have seen it in its generation, so may we look upon it in its degeneration. (1) *It alters a man's country;* turns an *Israelite*

into an "*Ethiopian*," and thus causes a degeneration there. (2) It also *alters a man's nature;* gives a man the quality and disposition even of the beasts, makes him a "*leopard*," and thus makes a degeneration there. See Ps xlix. 20, "I was as a beast before Thee." Thus does sin degenerate, debase, and put the sinner below himself.

3. *The multiplication of sin.* It is various; expressed here by the "leopard's *spots*." Sin is a beast of divers colours and marks and spots. A large catalogue in Gal. v. 19, where the works of the flesh are made manifest. There are not more spots in a leopard than there are lusts in a corrupt heart.

4. *The universality of sin.* It is a deformity in all the parts, not one excepted: as is the blackness of the Ethiopian and the spots of the leopard. Sin makes a man universally sinful and polluted in every part and member of him (Isa. i. 5; Gen. vi. 5). On the other side, *good men are freed from these spots:* "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7); "Not having spot or wrinkle," &c. (Eph. v. 27). See also 2 Peter iii. 14; James i. 27; Jude 23.

Let us not look upon these things as mere metaphors, but as carrying a manifest truth and reality in them; believe them, and be affected by them. Let this carry us so much the more closely to Christ, and cause us to admire God's free grace in Him, as the "*Propitiation for sin*," and "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The vileness of sin should make it *loathsome to us*, and *love the means appointed for our recovery from it.*

II. The entanglements of sin. Expressed in the *unmovableness* and *unchangeableness* of it; as "the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots."

1. *The qualification* [or condition] *of the persons* "accustomed to do evil." More correctly "*taught* to do evil." Taught (1) *By doctrine and instruction.* There is a great deal of such teaching in the world (see Matt. v. 19; Tit. i. 11; Mark vii. 7); and a great deal of ill-learning also follows thereupon; people are here quickly taught, so capable and appreciative are they (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4). Those who are thus taught to do evil cannot do good; there is an impotency and indisposition upon them to all good, and a proneness to all evil. Popery, Pelagianism, Antinomianism, though they do not always break forth into actual enormities, yet have that within them which teaches and leads to sin. (2) *By pattern and example.* That which men see to be practised they soon and easily fall into. (3) *By practice and use* "accustomed to do evil." Use makes perfect. There is an art in wickedness itself: "wise to do evil." Men are not expert and expedite at first in such sins as swearing, drinking, gaming; but experience comes with use; then "they drink in iniquity as water"—"draw on iniquity as with cart-ropes"—"do evil with both hands earnestly"—"turn to evil course as a horse rusheth to the battle."

2. *The invincible necessity* which follows upon custom in sin—they "*cannot do good.*" As well attempt to make the Ethiopian white or remove spots from leopard, which are expressions of *labour in vain*, as to reduce an habituated sinner. The invincible necessity and tyranny of accustomed sin shows itself (1) In *an impotency to good* (Gal. v. 17). (2) A *precipitancy unto evil* (Eccles. viii. 11). The ground of this prevalency of custom is the fixedness of it; it being, as it were, a second nature, which is sure and constant to its principle. *Naturalia non mutantur;* those things which are natural are unchangeable. (*a*) *Take heed of having anything to do with sin at first.* (*b.*) *If any should fall into sin, do not stay in it, but hasten out of it with speed* (Rom. vi. 1). (*c.*) *Take heed of relapses, and falling back to sin again* (2 Pet. ii. 20). Evil custom reassumed and habits returned to are specially dangerous.

But *when is sin come to a* habit? Or how may it be discerned so to be? We may know it by three considerations—

i. *Frequency.* When often and familiarly committed. Ἐγγὺς τὸ πολλάκις τῷ

ἄει, says the philosopher: That which is *often* is next to that which is *always*; and it very suddenly falls into it.

ii. *Facility.* When one is expedite in doing it. "He that is born of God *doth not commit sin;*" *i.e.*, does not make a trade of it; but with an unregenerate heart it is far otherwise, he is prompt and ready at it.

iii. [*Felicity*] *complacency and delight* in it. "They count it pleasure to riot in the daytime" (2 Pet. ii. 13; Ps. lxii. 4). When wickedness has reached this height in those corrupted with it, it proves very hard and difficult to wean them from it: an invincible necessity lies upon the accustomed sinner.

Reflection. This seems a very UNCOMFORTABLE DOCTRINE, that *an accustomed sinner is unreclaimable*, and seems to carry much disheartening and discouragement in it. For are those inured to sin altogether lost,—without hope of recovery? This is to be understood, not absolutely and peremptorily, but with due limitation. There is One who can reduce, reform, and reclaim an habituated offender. "Who can bring clean out of unclean?" "Not one;" *i.e.*, not one *man*. Comp. Matt. xix. 26. The Lord, by converting grace, can make the most monstrous sinner a good Christian; can change the skin of the Ethiopian, &c. *Instances:* Manasses, Paul, jailor, Mary Magdalene. (See Isa. xi. 6, 7; Ps. lxviii. 31; Acts viii. 27; Ethiopian changed his skin.) The Lord is able. But we must take the words as applicable to the sinner, thus—

1. *He cannot do it*, i.e., *of himself.* An accustomed sinner cannot alter his own heart or course (Jer. x. 23). It is not the question, Can the Ethiopian's skin *be changed?* but, Can *he* change it? (Comp. 2 Cor. iii. 5; Phil. ii. 13.) We can no more convert ourselves than create ourselves, no more give ourselves a spiritual being than a natural, no more raise ourselves from the death of sin than from the death of the grave.

2. He cannot do it, *i.e.*, *easily.* There is great difficulty in reclaiming one habituated in sin. (*a.*) Because *Satan* will be busy in presenting his temptations; (*b.*) *Lust* in the heart of man will struggle towards the enticement (Gal. v. 17); (*c.*) *Grace* is oftentimes asleep, which should restrain and subdue sin.

Suggestions: 1. It is not enough for us to abstain from evil, we must also "*do good*" (see Ps. xxxiv. 14; Isa. xvi. 17; Rom. xii. 9). This meets your *negative Christians*, merely inoffensive; like Pharisee, "no extortioner, no thief," &c. But what *good* do they *do?* 2. *Sins of commission* have sins of *omission* in them. Doing what they should not, they neglect what they should do: for they *forfeit the opportunity, lose the ability*, and *alienate the proffered assistance* (Ps. li. 11). 3. *No man can do any good till his nature be first changed.* We must become good ourselves, "change skin," *then* may good come from us. This is a fact confirmed by *observation* (Matt. vii. 16), and by *doctrine* (Heb. xi. 6). Therefore should we seek the regenerating of God's Spirit.—*Thomas Norton, D.D.*, A.D. 1678.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XIII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. THE UNWASHED GIRDLE. "Put it not in water," *i.e.*, to wash or whiten it; but take it as it is first made, *Ut sorditiem magis contrahat*, to show, say some, that the Jewish nation, when first chosen, was *black by sin* and nothing amiable. Or, "Put it not in water," *i.e.*, keep it from being rotted, as a type of *God's* care of and kindness to that people.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 5. THE BURIED GIRDLE. "God has cast off His first people, the whole house of Judah and of Jerusalem. . . . God has put *us* on as a girdle in their stead. For He has not thrown away the girdle and remained unadorned, but has woven Himself another. This girdle is the Church from the heathen. It should know that, as God spared not the former, much more will He not spare *it* when it sins and is not worthy of God's loins."—*Origen.*

Vers. 2, 5. THE STANDARD OF GODLY CONDUCT. *Perfect obedience.*

"I worship Thee, sweet Will of God!
And all Thy ways adore:
And every day I live, I seem
To love Thee more and more.

"When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do
And leave the rest to Thee.

"I know not what it is to doubt,
My heart is ever gay,—
I run no risks, for come what will
Thou always hast Thy way!

"I have no cares, O blessed will,
For all my cares are Thine;
I live in triumph, Lord, for Thou
Hast made Thy triumph mine."
—*Faber.*

Ver. 9. PRIDE ABASED. "There never was a saint yet that grew proud of his fine feathers but the Lord plucked them out; there never was an angel that had pride in his heart but he lost his wings and fell into Gehenna, as Satan and those fallen angels did; and there never shall be a saint who indulges self-conceit and spiritual pride but the Lord will spoil his glories and trample his honours in the mire."—*Spurgeon.*

"Pride thrust proud Nebuchadnezzar out of men's society, proud Saul out of his kingdom, proud Adam out of Paradise, proud Haman out of court, proud Lucifer out of heaven."—*Henry Smith.*

"Whose robe is white, but heart is black with pride,
He for himself hell's gate has opened wide,
For, weighed in God-the-All-sufficient's scale,
Not claims nor righteousness of man avail;
But these are costly in His sight indeed—
Repentance, contrite shame, and sense of need."
—*Trench.*

"Remember what thou wert before thy birth—*nothing;* what thou wert for many years after—*weakness;* what in all thy life—*a great sinner;* what in all thy excellencies—a mere *debtor to God,* to thy parents, to the earth, and to all creatures. Upon these or the like meditations, if we dwell, we shall see nothing more reasonable than to be humble, and nothing more foolish than to be proud."—*Bishop Taylor.*

"Those boughs and branches of trees which are most richly laden with fruit bend downwards and hang lowest."—*Dr. Gill.*

"Lowliness is the base of every virtue:
And he who goes the lowest builds the safest.
May God keep all His pity for the proud!"
—*Bailey.*

Ver. 15. BE NOT PROUD. "I have read of Menecrates, a physician that would needs be counted a god, and took no other fee of his patients but their vow to worship him. Dionysius Syracusanus, hearing of this, invited him to a banquet, and, to honour him according to his desire, set before him nothing but a censer of frankincense, with the smoke whereof he was feasted till he starved, while others fed on good meat."—*J. Adams.*

"Diogenes, being at Olympia, saw at that celebrated festival some young men of Rhodes arrayed most magnificently and exclaimed, "This is pride!" Afterwards meeting with some Lacedæmonians in a mean and sordid dress, he saw the same vanity in another guise, and said, "And this is also pride!"

Ver. 16. REPENTANCE GLORIFYING GOD.

"On bended knees, replete with godly grief,
See where the mourner kneels to seek relief,
No 'God I thank Thee!' freezes on his tongue
For works of merit that to him belong;
Deep in his soul conviction's ploughshare rings,
And to the surface his corruption brings;
He loathes himself, in lowest dust he lies,
And, all-abased, 'Unclean, unclean!' he cries.
From his full heart pours forth the gushing plea,
'God of the lost, be merciful to me!'
The light of life descends in heavenly rays,
And angels shout and sing, 'Behold, he prays!'"
—*W. Holmes.*

"Christ Jesus rejoices over those as blessed who mourn over themselves as cursed, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Out of the subtlest water God can brew the sweetest liquor. The skilful bee gathers the best honey from the bitterest herb. When the cloud has been dissolved into a shower there presently follows a glorious sunshine. The more a stone is wounded by the hand of an engraver, the greater beauty is superinduced thereon. By groans unutterable the Lord ushers in joys unspeakable."—*Secker.*

Ver. 16. "STUMBLE UPON THE DARK MOUNTAINS:"

"Not Thou from us, O Lord! but we
Withdraw ourselves from Thee.

"When we are dark and dead,
And Thou art covered with a cloud
Hanging before Thee like a shroud,
So that our prayer can find no way,
Oh, teach us that we do not say,
'Where is *Thy* brightness fled?'

"But that we search and try
What in ourselves has wrought this blame,
For Thou remainest still the same;
But earth's own vapours earth may fill
With darkness and thick clouds, while still
The sun is in the sky."—*Trench.*

"Arise, and search thy heart—let nothing stay thee;
The fatal cause is there;
This traitor in thy soul may else betray thee
To ruin and despair.

"Nor doubt, when thou with heart contrite and lowly
Hast all thy sins confess'd,
Thy night shall pass away, and God the holy
Shall hear and give thee rest."—*Dewart.*

Goethe's dying exclamation was mournfully significant—"Open the shutter, and let in more light!" Hobbes, the infidel, before death, said, "I am taking a fearful leap into the dark!"

Ver. 17. LAMENTING PRIDE. Howard, the noble philanthropist, was one day visited by a German Count, governor of Upper Austria, with his countess, interested to see the man who had so excited public attention. The Count asked his opinion as to the state of the prisons in his department. Mr. Howard replied, "The worst in all Germany;" and advised that the Countess should visit the female prisoners. "I," she said haughtily, "I go into prisons!" and hastily left his presence in anger. Howard, indignant at her proud and unfeeling disposition, followed her, and said in earnest remonstrance, "Madam, remember you are a woman yourself, and must soon, like the most miserable prisoner in your dungeons, be enclosed in a small space of that earth from which you equally originated!"

Ver. 17. SORROWFUL TEARS.

"What gem hath dropp'd, and sparkles o'er his chain?
The tear most sacred—shed for others' pain,
That starts at once—bright, pure—from pity's mine,
Already polished by the hand Divine."
—*Byron.*

"The rose is fairest washed with morning dew,
And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears." —*Scott.*

"Hide not thy tears, weep boldly—and be proud
To give the flowing virtue manly way:
'Tis Nature's mark, to know an honest heart by.
Shame on those breasts of stone that cannot melt
In soft adoption of another's sorrow."—*Hill.*

Ver. 18. "THE QUEEN." The Hebrew has no word to express "queen," the fem. of "king," nor its equivalent dignity. The word, *gebirah*, translated queen, means "mistress" or "lady," and is used only twice of a king's wife (1 Kings xi. 19, wife of king of Egypt, and 2 Kings x. 13, Jezebel, who was not only wife but daughter of a king). In two other places (Jer. xiii. 18; xxix. 2) it may be king's mother, as it clearly is in 1 Kings xv. 13; 2 Chron. xv. 16. —*Gray.*

Ver. 18. REBUKING ROYALTY. When Beza, in the behalf of the Reformed Churches of France, made a speech at Possiacum before the young king and the queen-mother, he spake so effectually, says Rivet, that a great cardinal who heard it wished that either he had been dumb that day, or that they had all been deaf.

Ver. 23. INVETERATE HABITS. "Bad habits are very easily formed, but when once formed they are like the course of a mighty river. Some of the oldest rivers in the world have the same place in the map, and the same windings on the face of the earth which they first cut for themselves; and that way they have continued to follow through the succession of generations."—*J. A. Wallace.*

"When at first from virtue's path we stray,
How shrinks the feeble heart with sad dismay!
More bold at length, by powerful habit led,
Careless and scar'd the dreary wild we tread;
Behold the gaping gulf of sin with scorn,
And plunging deep to endless death are borne." —*J. Scott.*

"Then the shepherds led the pilgrims to a place where they saw one Fool, and

one Want-wit washing an Ethiopian, with an intention to make him white; but the more they washed him the blacker he was. Then they asked the shepherds what this should mean. So they told them, saying, "Thus it is with the vile person: all means used to get such an one a good name, shall in conclusion tend but to make him more abominable. Thus it was with the Pharisees, and so shall it be with all hypocrites."—*Bunyan.*

"Habitual evils change not on a sudden,
But many days must pass, and many sorrows;
Conscious remorse and anguish must be felt,
To curb desire, to break the stubborn will,
And work a second nature in the soul,
Ere Virtue can resume the place she lost."
—*Rowe.*

"Said Diogenes, when he reproved an ill man to no purpose, '*Æthiopem abluo ut candidum reddam;*' I do but wash a blackamoor. And the like said Nazianzen concerning Julian the Apostate It is said that the negroes paint the devil white, as being a colour contrary to their own, and which they less well affect."—*Trapp.*

"Custom in sin takes away the sense of it: and it looks for continual entertainment where it hath once gotten a haunt. Nothing so weak as water; yet let much water (as sin, Satan, and custom) be joined together, and nothing stronger. It was not for nothing, therefore, that the Cretans, when they would curse their enemies with most bitter execrations, wished that they might take delight in some or other evil custom. *Modestoque voti genere efficacissimum ultionis genus reperiunt*, saith the historian (Val. Max.); by a modest kind of wish they sufficiently avenged themselves."—*Idem.*

CHAPTER XIV.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—**1. Chronology of the Chapter.** This and chapter xv. form one prophecy (although Lange, Keil, and others connect chapters xiv. to xvii., regarding them as interwoven and synchronous). From evidence of personal hardship towards Jeremiah (xv. 10), most probably these prophecies were delivered during the early years of Jehoiakim's reign. (See on chapter vii.) Also for *Contemporary Scriptures: National Affairs, Contemporaneous History*, see chapter vii.

2. Natural History.—Ver. 1. "*Dearth:*" *batstsoreth*, restraint, *sc.* of rain. Although Palestine is a very fruitful land, famine naturally followed close upon failure of rain (1 Kings xvii.; Josephus, *Ant.* xv. 9, 1). See on chapter ii. ver. 16; and specially *Historic Events, cf.* "The Land withered by Drought," p. 62. Ver. 2. "*Gates languish.*" (See *Addenda* on verse). Ver. 5. "*The hind:*" the female of the hart or stag: אַיֶּלֶת. The *Ayeleth* is a frequent Scripture figure suggesting gentleness (Prov. v. 19), fleetness and agility (Ps. xviii. 33; Hab. iii. 19), delicate modesty (Cant. ii. 7, iii. 5), and in this verse, maternal affection, she being adduced as an extreme illustration of the effects of the famine on one of the most ardent creatures. Ver. 6. "*Wild asses:*" *cf.* notes on ii. 24. "*Dragons:*" *cf.* notes on ix. 11.

3. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 3. "*Nobles have sent their little ones to the waters:*" *i.e.*, to the tanks for holding water; pits or cisterns. (See notes on ii. 13.) "*Covered their heads:*" (See on ii. 37). Ver. 8. "*Wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night:*" *i.e., that pitcheth his tent to tarry:* in recognition of the custom of travellers to carry their tent with them, and in which they tarried for the night. Ver. 12. "*An oblation:*" *i.e.*, meat-offering (*cf.* Lev. ii. 1); the *minchah*, which was not a sacrificial offering, but was usually offered as supplementary thereto, and consisted of articles of food, or of oil.

4. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 1. "*Dearth:*" occurring here in the plural, הַבַּצָּרוֹת, *restraints*, it does not necessarily imply a numerical succession of dearths, but is used idiomatically (a common form in the Heb.) for *intensity* and *continuance*. Whatever has extension of time or space is expressed by the Heb. pl. Ver. 2. "*Black unto the ground:*" "covered by mourning even to the earth" (Naeg.); "they bow mourning towards the earth" (Hend.). Ver. 3. "Nobles sent *their little ones:*" the word rendered "little ones," צְעִיר, = to be *mean, inferior*, as well as *little*; and in this instance more correctly should be, their *servants* or *inferiors*. Ver. 4. "*Ground is chapt:*" lit. *dismayed*. Ver. 5. "*No grass:*" comp. with ver. 6, "*no grass.*" The two words are different, דֶּשֶׁא (ver. 5), = *green-grass*; עֵשֶׂב, (ver. 6), = *under-shrubs*, or bushes (Gen. i. 11, = *herb*). Ver. 8. "*Turneth aside to tarry for a night:*" נָטָה לָלוּן; the simple meaning of נָטָה here rendered "turneth aside," is *to stretch out*,

unfold, i.e., to spread a tent: lit. to stretch (his tent) to pass the night. Ver. 9. "*A man astonied:*" a word which occurs only here, נְדָהֵם; Syriac gives *feeble*, Vulgate, *vagus;* but the LXX (either mistaking the word for נִרְדָּם, or changing it) render it by *ὑπνῶν, in deep sleep;* but the word is by all critics traced to the Arabic *dahama*, to *confound, take unawares, stupify, strike dumb.* Ver. 13. "*Give you assured peace:*" lit. peace of truth, *i.e.*, true, *durable peace.* Ver. 14. "*A thing of nought:*" אֱלִיל, "*elil* is probably a diminution of *el*, God, and signifies a small idol made of the more precious metals (Isa. ii. 20, xix. 3). But as the Jews habitually called idols *vanity, falsehood*, and the like, the word *elil* soon suggested a derivation from the negative particle *al, not:* and there are two places where it has the secondary meaning of *worthlessness* (Job xiii. 4; Zech. xi. 17). A.V. *Idol shepherd. Elul* (in text) may be an oracle given by an *Elil.*"—Dr. Payne Smith. Ver. 17. "*A very grievous blow:*" *cf.* notes on x. 19. Ver. 18. "*Behold them that are sick with famine:*" lit. the sickness, or tortures of famine, תַּחֲלוּאֵי, *torments.* "*Go about into a land that they know not:*" *Hend.* = "shall migrate into a land which they know not;" *Naeg.*, "go into the country and know nothing;" *Speaker's Com.*, "go about into a land and know not;" *Rosen. Umbreit*, "wander about in the land and know not what to do;" *Graf.* "shall go as beggars into a strange land;" *Hitzig.* "they move into a land which they know not."

HOMILIES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XIV.

Sections 1–9. Pleading with God over a calamitous dearth.
" 10–16. Jehovah's refusal to allow intercession to prevail.
" 17–22. A piteous lament for the nation's woe.

Vers. 1–9. Pleading with God over a Calamitous Dearth.

The first verse is the title to the whole chapter: it does indeed all *concern the dearth*, but much of it consists of the prophet's prayers,—not unfitly said to be "The word of the Lord which came to him;" for every *acceptable prayer* God puts into our hearts; our word that goes to Him is His word that comes to us.

I. **The language of nature lamenting the calamity.**

1. *The people of the land were all in tears.* "Judah mourns;" not for the sin but for the trouble, not for the withholding of God's favour but of rain. "The gates languish," those who pass through them, or assemble there are pale with want and fear "They are black unto the ground;" as mourners, they sit on the ground. "The cry of Jerusalem is gone up;" not the cry of their prayer but of their complaint.

2. *The great men of the land felt the judgment.* "The nobles sent," &c.; perhaps having had to part with their servants through scarcity, they had to send their own "*children*" (comp. 1 Kings xviii. 5, 6). Rather, their *inferior officers.* But they "returned with their vessels empty." Not "ashamed" for their sins but unsuccess.

3. *The husbandmen suffered most severely* (ver. 4). The ground was so parched and hard, nothing could be done. How dependent are husbandmen upon the Divine providences!

4. *The case even of the wild beasts was very pitiable* (vers. 5, 6). Man's sins bring judgments upon the earth which make even the inferior creatures groan. "The hinds," what have they done? Lovely and loving creatures; yet they were driven to act contrary to natural instincts. "The wild asses" cannot breathe in the parched land, so climb to "highest places," and there "snuff up the wind like dragons."

II. **The language of grace lamenting the iniquity, and complaining to God of the calamity.**

The people are not forward to pray, but the prophet prays for them, to excite them to pray for themselves.

1. *Sin is humbly confessed* (ver. 7). Our sins are witnesses against us, and true penitents see them as such: too numerous to be concealed, for they "are many:" too heinous to be excused, for they are "against Thee."

2. *Mercy is earnestly begged.* "Though our iniquities testify against us, yet do Thou it for Thy name's sake" (ver. 7). Not particularising *what*, leaving that to God. Our best pleas in prayer are fetched from the glory of God's own name—we have nothing to plead in ourselves, but everything in Him. Also, "*Leave us not*" (ver. 9). We should dread and deprecate God's departure more than every loss.

3. *Their relation to God is most pathetically pleaded.* Their interest in Him and expectations from Him grounded thereon (vers. 8, 9).

(1.) They look upon Him as *One they have reason to expect should deliver them in distress.* He pleads, "Thou art the *Hope of Israel;*" God had encouraged His people to hope in Him. "*The Saviour thereof in time of trouble;*" since God is their all-sufficient Saviour they ought to look to Him in their greatest straits. "*Thou art in the midst of us;*" we have the special tokens of Thy presence, temple, ark, oracles. "*We are called by Thy name:*" therefore, what evils we are under reflect dishonour upon Thee, as if Thou wert not able so relieve Thine own.

(2.) It, therefore, *grieves them that He does not appear for their deliverance.* Because He will seem (*a.*) *Unconcerned for His own people;* as "a *stranger in the land,*" who does not interest himself in its interests; "*as a wayfaring man,*" &c., instead of "resting here for ever." Though God never is, yet He sometimes seems careless of His Church. Christ slept when His disciples were in a storm. (*b.*) *Incapable of giving them relief.* (Comp. Num. xiv. 16.) "*As a man astonied,*" at a loss what to do, or "*as a mighty man*" overpowered by others more mighty, and therefore "cannot save." Either conception was an insult to the Divine perfections. It becomes us thus in prayer to be equally concerned for God's glory. (Comp. *Henry.* See also *Noticeable Topics* to chap. xiv. *infra.*)

Vers. 10–16. Jehovah's Refusal to allow Intercession to Prevail.

See *Addenda* on ver. 8, "*Intercessory Prayer;*" and on ver. 12, "*Fasting offensive.*" Comp. *Section* chap. xi. 14–17; also on chap. vii. 16–20.

I. The Lord's answer to the prophet's prayer.

1. *He points to the backsliding of the people,* for which He now punishes them (ver. 10). In the "*thus* have they loved to wander" lies a backward reference: not to the vain wanderings for water (ver. 3), nor to the restless movements of the thirsty animals (ver. 5, 6), but to the substance of Jeremiah's prayer, in which he complained of God's seeming alienation and indifference: *thus,* in like degree as Jehovah has estranged Himself from His people (vers. 8, 9), have they estranged themselves from their God. They loved to wander after strange gods, therefore He punishes them (Hos. viii. 13).

2. He refuses the prophet's prayer because *He loathes the people's soulless fastings and sacrifices* (vers. 11, 12). They turn to Him in their need, but only in lip service and formality; their hearts are with their idols. By bringing sacrifices, these hollow-hearted hypocrites thought to give "pleasure" to God, and win His leniency and mercy.

3. *He specifies the means by which He will destroy this backsliding people.* Threefold: battle, famine, and pestilence, when their cities are besieged by the nearing foe (*cf.* Lev. xxvi. 25, *f.*).

II. The prophet renews his endeavours to entreat God's favour.

1. *He lays stress on the fact that they had been deceived* (ver. 13). He offers the excuse for this people that the delusive forecastings of false prophets who promised peace had confirmed them in their infatuation.

2. *But they are not excused on that account; for they gave credit to lies.* (1) God had not commissioned these prophets (ver. 14). The cumulation of these words, "lying vision," &c., shows God's indignation against the wicked practices of these men. (2) Their easy and willing dupes are condemned to ignominy.

The lies of these false prophets flattered the sinful passions of the people, who therefore would not hear nor take to heart the word of the true prophets who preached repentance and return to God.

3. *Seducers should perish with those they seduced.* They should perish "by sword and famine" who affirmed these should not come upon the people. And with the specification of the various classes of the people upon whom judgments should fall, must be compared the account of their participation in idolatry (vii. 18).—*Arranged from Keil.*

Vers. 18–20. A Piteous Lament for the Nation's Woe.

"Thou shalt say unto them this word;" but actually no word from God follows. What then? Is there a message here lost from God's book? Nay. Jehovah bids His prophet utter his cries and prayers in the hearing of the hardened nation and pour out his tears of grief; that his pain in contemplating Judah's nearing ruin may touch and arouse them.

I. Doleful scenes. Depicted vividly by the prophet, whose shocked and appalled gaze rests, by prevision, upon them.

1. *Occasions for grief.* The miseries the Chaldeans would inflict are all arrayed under his eye: "broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow." (See *Section*, x. 17–25; and *Homilies* on x. 19, 20.) "*In the field*," the slain; "*in the city*," the starved.

2. *Profusion of tears.* For one he *tenderly cherishes*—"the virgin daughter of my people;" and in whose miseries he *poignantly shares*. "Let mine eyes run down with tears," &c. (See *Homilies* and *Notes* on ix. 1, and xiii. 17.)

II. Painful conjectures. He lifts his eyes from the scene of stricken Judah to Judah's God, and assays to interpret God's reason,—the dreadful explanation that lay behind the appalling facts: "Hast thou utterly rejected?" &c. (ver. 19).

1. *That God had abandoned His people.* It seemed incredible. Paul asked in equal amaze and shrinking, "Hath God then cast away His people?" (Rom. xi. 1). True, Judah merited such abandonment: but is the rejection *final*, hopeless: "*utterly rejected*"?

2. *That Zion should be "loathed" by Him.* The word means, *to throw away as worthless.* And can Zion have become thus obnoxious to Jehovah? No yearning pity left in the "*soul*" of Him who had said, "I remember *for thy sake* the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals!" (See *Notes* and *Homilies* on ii. 2, 3.)

III. Frustrated hopes. Here the prophet expresses the people's delusive expectations: "We looked for peace," &c.

1. *Flattering hopes.* Easily and gladly cherished. Sinners are ready to believe in coming good.

2. *False hopes.* Unfounded expectations bring bitter awakenings: the delusions yield to desolations. (See *Notes* and *Homilies* on viii. 16.)

IV. Penitent confessions. This is language spoken *for* them which should have been spoken *by* them (ver. 20).

1. *Personal transgression.* "Our wickedness;" their own individual outrage of righteousness, violation of covenants, provocations of Divine wrath. No evading the directness of their criminality.

2. *Perpetuated iniquity.* "The iniquity of our fathers." Not that they acknowledged their ancestors' sin, they might leave that; but *we* acknowledge *our* wickedness, the iniquity of our fathers," *i.e.*, which is the *repetition of their iniquity.*

3. *Inexcusable wickedness.* "Sinned against *Thee!*" Against a God so holy, munificent, faithful. (See *Addenda* on ver. 20, "*Sin acknowledged.*")

IV. Wrestling prayers. Jeremiah had been prohibited by God to pray (ver. 11), but he returns to his knees in impassioned importunity and pathos.

1. *He pleads that God will not alienate His heart from Judah.* Afflict with Thine hand if need be, but do not shut us from Thine heart: "*do not abhor us.*"

2. *He appeals to the honour and fidelity of Jehovah.* The honour of His *name*: "For Thy name's sake." The honour of His *temple*; "the throne of Thy glory," preserve that from defamation and spoliation. The honour of His *promises*: "break not Thy covenant with us." *Remember* Thy word unto Thy servants, &c.

3. *He casts all hope implicitly on God. No other object of worship* availed for their help: "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?" No *regard to Nature* or heed of second causes would now suffice: "Can the *heavens give* showers?" Nay, God "made all these things." Therefore, *on Him alone and trustfully they would wait* (Zech. x. 1). And this was the *encouragement* of their trust; not only in God's power as *Creator*, but in this fact, "Art not Thou He, O Lord *our God*?" "*Our* help is in the name of the Lord, who made both heaven and earth."

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1. "*Concerning the dearth*:" see HISTORIC EVENTS. *Cf. The land withered by drought*, chap. iii. 3; and Notes and Homily on ix. 12.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* VAIN SEARCH FOR WATER.

For explanation of "pits and no water," see Notes, *Manners and Customs*, ch. ii. 13: and for General Comments, see *Section* ii. 9–13. See also *Addenda* on verse.

I. God's vital drink: "water." In God's hand to give or withhold.

1. *Water, a physical necessity.* Cannot exist without it. A common commodity, despised as a drink by those of vitiated taste, but nevertheless imperative for all.

2. *Water, a spiritual emblem.* Water of life = (a.) the *Gospel of Jesus*—"If any thirst, come to Me and drink:" (b.) the *sanctifying Spirit* "be in you a well of water:" (c.) the *sacred refreshings*—Draw, water out of the wells of salvation." Without these none can live. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the *waters*."

II. Man's urgent thirst. The drought caused misery and mourning everywhere: "Judah mourneth, gates languish" (ver. 2). Suggests: what appalling woe would ensue were the *Gospel withdrawn* from man: the *Spirit's sanctifying ministry* recalled by Jesus; and the "*wells of salvation*" closed against the pilgrims to Zion!

1. *Without drink man must perish* So spiritually.

2. *Unless he drink* SOON *he must die.* Therefore "the nobles" bestirred themselves: as once king Ahab and his lord chamberlain Obadiah had to do (1 Kings xviii. 5, 6): for all ranks of mankind are dependent on water for life—must drink or die.

III. Search utterly vain. "Found no water."

1. *Fruitless efforts.* "They came to the pits, and returned with their vessels empty." So men who seek happiness, and self-justification, and peace of spirit, and eternal hopes, in *dry pits*.

2. *Mocking sources.* These "pits" were the nation's sole supplies—their reservoirs. "Broken cisterns which hold no water." (See on chap. ii. 13; specially *Noticeable Topics*.)

3. *Desolating shame.* "Returned, ashamed, *covered heads*:" sign of very great grief (2 Sam. xv. 30; xix. 4). What shame and grief will cover souls who return to their Lord, *never having found living water*, at the great judgment! And what anguish will overwhelm those who, in the eternal world, *never have* "*a drop of water* to cool their tongues!"

(a.) When *God withholds rain* man's effort and hopes perish amid natural drought.

(b.) When *the era of grace closes*, water will nowhere, never be found for man's spiritual needs.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* CISTERNS AND THE FOUNTAIN. "They came to the pits, and found no water."

Jeremiah describes the anxiety of the nobles for their own safety. They and their families were in imminent peril. The claims of nature were urgent and the supply doubtful. In the hour of their anguish, both children and servants were sent forth to see if perchance any water might yet remain in the natural hollows, or in the artificial dykes and cisterns. Their effort was vain, neither nature nor art responded to their cry nor rewarded their effort. Failure and disappointment made their hearts sad. They covered their heads with shame, confusion, and sorrow. It is a struggle for life, and death appeared to be gaining the victory. Their boasting was hushed, their folly was made clear, their sin was finding them out, as God declared it would. They now realised that it was a mournful and fatal error in them to forsake the *Fountain of Living Waters*.

[God is the Fountain. The arm of flesh, the fancies of the human brain, the energies of human life are not such as to enable man to do without God. *Man's reason* is a useful cistern, but fails most when most required. God's word of promise is the fountain whence flows our hope when reason's efforts fail. *Creeds* are cisterns holding for practical and ready use portions of knowledge, but Christ is the Fountain in which all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are to be found, and from whom alone they are to be obtained. *Science* hews out her hollows in the rock, explores the cave, descends the valley, or scales the mountain height if she may but satisfy the thirst of man, but faith, knowing that man thirsts for the living God, listens for the voice of Him who says "Come unto *Me* and drink."]

I. **Cisterns are human, the Fountain is Divine.**

Human *fancies, speculations, attainments, achievements, inventions, and works* are insufficient. The love of God, the work of Christ, the fellowship of the Spirit, the exercise of faith, these are *Divine, saving, comforting*.

II. **Cisterns are dependent, the Fountain is self-sustaining.**

Our thoughts and experiences depend on many circumstances, but *God revealed, approachable, loved, obeyed, adored*, is in us an ever-springing well, &c.

III. **Cisterns are superficial, the Fountain deep.**

Things earthly and human easily dried up, or by constant demand exhausted. Things Divine *imperishable, inexhaustible*. God's love, word, glory The well is deep. The waterpot is small.

IV. **Cisterns are fullest when least needed, the Fountain always full.**

The Prodigal found it so. It was so at the marriage in Cana. The wine was exhausted, but Christ and His power were *then* best displayed.

V. **Cisterns are useful only as connected with the fountain.**

Solomon's pools. Water-supply of our large towns. Cisterns, when rightly used, receive and cherish that which flows from the fountain. A cistern instead of, or apart from, a fountain is the work of presumption and folly, of unbelief and sin.

VI. **Cisterns need to be kept in good condition as well as being connected with the fountain.**

Broken cisterns can hold no water. The means of grace, the throne of grace, the obedience of faith, and all God's methods of communicating good should be kept in proper repair, and constant use. The wretched and selfish pursuits of unbelief and sin are incapable of holding any divine blessing.

VII. **Come to the Fountain.** *Christ is the Fountain.* "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." Come and wash. Come and drink.

APPLICATION—

1. Avoid the follies of those who forsake God.

2. Know that all earthly comforts are insufficient and transient.

3. At the time of your deepest need go not to pits, but to THE FOUNTAIN.—*W. Whale.*

Ver. 7. *Theme:* MAN PERISHES; GOD MUST WORK.

Jews in great distress by reason of drought. Every temporal calamity was viewed by them as a Divine judgment. No rain, blighted country, cattle perish-

ing, people languishing in gates, what all this but proof of God's displeasure?

Close analogy between temporal and spiritual: dearth on land = desolation of soul; no gracious rain = no heavenly blessing. This their case: through sin alienated God; ver. 8, implying fellowship, had ceased, *God withdrawn.* While ver. 9 suggests that in their distress *God did not arise.*

Desolate lot. Yet many cry, Why as a Stranger to our souls? Why lost fellowship with Thee? "Where is the blessedness I knew?" O Lord, Saviour of Israel, why as cannot save? Men *need salvation,* from sin, perils, care. The cry of perishing rises, "*O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy name's sake.*"

I. **A trustful prayer**: "O Lord, do Thou it!" Whatever the prayer sought, it is clear that the prophet knew—

1. *God could answer it.* If favour lost, He could renew. Aid needed, God could exert power. Their case could not surpass Him. Hence asked ver. 9. Knew God *could* "do it." We know "nothing is too hard for the Lord." Deep misery, extreme need, great iniquity, ready to perish; yet God can "do" all our case requires.

2. *God alone could answer that prayer.* Appeal direct to "Lord: do *Thou* it." (See ver. 22). Prophet learned the vanity of every other trust, but God was "Hope of Israel." He was his exclusive trust, to none other would he seek. Misery great, yet if Lord not relieve, none could. The Lord is *our* only source of hope or help. Look not elsewhere, though He seem to withhold.

II. **A mournful confession**: "Our iniquities testify against us." Sad that prayer must ever open with this acknowledgment!

1. *Their evil condition.* "*Iniquities,*" the guilt and curse of sin was on them. Many in number; though they had received warning, and might have shunned them. "*Testified against them*"—conscience reproached; pursued by them. Hearts cry out against us. Evil lives rise up in witness against us, and call for our condemnation.

2 *Their ill desert.* The prayer was for God's favour, but sins were *against them,* menaced them. Mercy was asked, but iniquities cried out for judgment. "My sins are ever before me;" "Our iniquities are gone up into the heavens."

3. *Their stricken spirit.* Prayer offered with shame and contrition. No extenuation, no excuses. Confession ought thus to be made in a spirit of deep sorrow, and humble sense of demerit. (See *Addenda* ver. 7, *Contrite Prayer.*)

III. **A prevailing plea**: "Do it, *for Thy name's sake.*"

1. Recognises the *total absence of any claim to mercy.* Could solicit nothing for *their sakes.*

2. *Forgoes all allusion to mitigating circumstances.* Nothing mentioned to soften their criminality and propitiate God. "Just as I am."

3. *Bases the hope of compassion on the Name of God.* His name was "The Lord merciful and gracious," &c. On the ground that God's name declares Him forgiving and loving, ask forgiveness and love divine! "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." "If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us," &c. In this Gospel dispensation we have the great *Name* of *Jesus,* "Saviour," to plead; and "whatever ye shall ask the *Father,* in *my name,* He will give it."

Theme: GOD'S NAME THE SINNER'S PLEA.

The prophet, though forbidden to pray (vii. 16; xi. 14, and ver. 11), could not forbear, but urged his prayers with all imaginable tenderness and compassion. Though he could find no excuse for Israel, he could find a plea in the very character of God.

I. **The sinner's acknowledgment.**

1. *The prophet's confession is precisely such as befits the world at large.* (Comp. Hos. vii. 10; Ps. xxxvi. 1; Hos. v. 4, 5.)

2. *With too great reason, also, may it be adopted, even by the best of men.* The world are willing slaves of sin, whilst the godly resist spiritual enemies. Yet much amiss within them: sins of com-

mission, omission, and defect (Isa. lix. 12).

II. The sinner's plea. The request is not specified, but seems to be for restoration of God's favour. This all may ask, not for what is in us, but for the sake of God's honour, and the glory of His name.

1. *His plea is open to all.* His exercise of mercy is His highest glory (Deut. ix. 5; Ezek. xx. 9, 14, 22). Even when we have provoked God to anger, we may approach Him with this plea (see Josh. vii. 8, 9).

2. *This plea shall never be urged in vain.* In Joshua's case it brought immediate success (Josh. vii. 10, 11). So with Moses (Exod. xxxii. 9–14). Surely when we plead the name of Jesus! (John xiv. 13, 14).

APPLICATION—

1. *What should be the effect of sin upon the soul?* Conviction of sin should not keep us from God, but *bring us to Him:* "though our iniquities testify," &c. (Comp. Ps. xxv. 11.) Sin is a just ground for humiliation, but not for discouragement.

2. *What shall surely be effectual to remove it from the soul?* Prayer: penitential weeping; humble and contrite (Jer. iii. 12, 13, 25) fervent and persevering (Dan. ix. 18, 19); offered in dependence on God's promised mercies in Christ Jesus (Jer. xiv. 20, 21). God has solemnly engaged not to cast out one who comes to Him in His Son's name (Jno. vi. 37).—*Simeon.*

(See *Noticeable Topic* on ver. 8, *infra*).

Ver. 8. *Theme:* GOD AND TROUBLED HUMANITY.

The troubles of Judah were overwhelming at this period. Indicated in preceding verses. Text is a patriotic wail: "O Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof," &c. We have to notice two things—

I. What God always is to troubled humanity.

1. *He is "the Hope."* The Hope of Israel. Men in trouble want hope. Hope alone can buoy up amidst the surging sea of sorrow. Of all true hope God is the author. (1) He is the *Inspirer* of true hope. He implanted the instinct in the human soul. He calls it forth by trial, makes the spark blaze in the dark night. (2) He is the *Sustainer* of all true hope. Oftentimes the lamp would go out did He not feed the waning flame, and shelter it from the gust. (3) He is the *Realizer* of all true hope. If ever the anticipated deliverance comes, it comes from Him. The storm-tossed mariner "He bringeth to the desired haven."

2. *He is the Saviour.* "The Saviour thereof." He has a claim to this title. (1) *The redemption system He has given to the world attests this.* The Gospel is an infallible antidote for all the sorrows of humanity. (2) *The experience of all who had attended to His directions* testifies this. It is no objection to this that men are not saved. The physician may have an infallible antidote, yet if the patient partake not of it, of what value is it to him? He alone can attest the full value of a nautical chart who has sailed by it. All the shipwrecks of those who neglected it is no argument against its infallibility. Every man that has adopted God's remedial scheme has been saved. He is the Saviour of the world.

II. What God sometimes seems to troubled humanity. "A stranger and a wayfaring man in the land." A stranger in the land is one more or less *unacquainted* with what is local and *uninterested* in it. There are times when God seems to be a "stranger" in these respects. He seems as if He did not know what was going on; or, if He knew it, was absolutely indifferent. When does He appear as if a *stranger to the good?*

1. *When Christlike enterprises are frustrated.* When great plans of social philanthropy and evangelical propagandism break down and disappoint the hopes of piety, the good man is likely to feel that God is "a stranger," that He is either ignorant of or indifferent to what is going on.

2. *When the most useful men are cut down in the very zenith of their life.* When the statesman with a measure for the liberties of a nation, an author with a book for the mental quickening of a

whole people, a preacher with a power to attract and interest listening thousands, is struck down in a moment, the good are likely to look on and cry out to the great God, "Why art Thou a stranger in the land?"

3. *When prosperity attends the wicked and adversity the good.* This has ever been felt to be a trial. "Wherefore do the wicked become rich?" Asaph said, "My foot well nigh slipped, when," &c. Who that sees the wicked rising to fortune and eminence, and the good sinking to penury and want, does not often exclaim within himself, "Why art Thou a stranger?"

4. *When enormous outrages are rampant in society.* Such as the crucifixion of Christ, tremendous wars, &c. At such seasons the good look up to heaven and cry, "Why art Thou a stranger?" Why not interpose, break the sword, and strike evil down?—*Homilist.*

Vers. 7–9. *Theme:* JEREMIAH A WRESTLER WITH THE LORD IN PRAYER.

In this he is a second Jacob who was called "Israel."

I. In what the Lord is strong against the prophet. The *sin of the people.* "Iniquities testify against us."

II. In what the prophet is strong against the Lord. The *name of the Lord.* "Though iniquities testify *against us*, do Thou it *for* Thy name's sake."

1. *In itself:* God's name compels Him to show He is not a desperate hero, a giant who cannot save (ver. 9).

2. *In that His name is borne by Israel:* thus He is bound to show Himself as He who is *in Israel* (not a guest or a "stranger," ver. 9), and consequently the comforter and helper of Israel.—*Heim and Hoffman,* "*The Major Prophets.* (See *Addenda* on ver. 8, "*Intercessory Prayer.*")

Theme: PRAYER HAS WITHIN ITSELF ITS OWN REWARD.

The prayer of the prophet consists of confession and petition:

I. Confession. This fitly begins. It is the *testimony of iniquity;* and that this iniquity is *against God Himself.* When we are to encounter any enemy or difficulty, it is sin weakens us. Now confession weakens *it,*—takes off the power of accusation.

II. Petition. "For Thy name's sake." This is the unfailing argument which abides always the same and hath always the same force. The children of God are much beholden to their troubles for clear experiences of themselves and God. Though thou art not clear in thy interest as a believer, yet plead thy interest as a sinner, which thou art sure of.—*Leighton,* quoted in *Lange.*

Comments—

In earnest and hearty prayer there is a *conflict between the spirit and the flesh.* The flesh regards the *greatness of the sins* (ver. 7), and conceives of God as a severe Judge, who either will not help further or *cannot help* (ver. 9). The spirit, on the other hand, adheres to *the name of God* (ver. 7), *i.e.,* to His promises; apprehends God by faith as his true comfort and aid, and depends upon Him.—*Cramer.*

"Ideo non vult Deus cito dare, ut discas ardentius orare."—*Augustine.*

The name of God is the manifestation of God's being. From Moses' time, Jehovah has revealed Himself as the Redeemer and Saviour of the children of Israel and as God who is merciful and gracious, &c. (Ex. xxxiv. 6). As such, He is *besought to reveal Himself* now that they *confess their backsliding and sin,* and seek His grace. *Not* for the sake of *His honours in the eyes of the world,* lest the heathen believe He has no power to help (as Graf. holds), for all reference to the heathen nations is foreign to this connection; but He is entreated to help, *not to belie the hope of His people,* because Israel sets its hope on Him as Saviour in time of need (ver. 9). If by withholding rain He makes His land and people to pine, then He does not reveal Himself as the Lord and owner of Judah, not as the God that dwells amidst His people, but He seems a *stranger* passing through the land, who sets up his tent there only to spend the night, who "feels no share in the weal or woe of the dwellers therein" (*Hitzig*). . . . The pleader makes further appeal to *God's almighty power.* It is impossible that God can

let Himself look like a *man at his wit's end*, or as a *nerveless warrior*, as He would seem if He should not give help to His people in their present need. . . . The passage closes with *an appeal to the relation of grace* which Jehovah sustains towards His people: "Yet art Thou in our midst," *i.e.*, present to Thy people. "Thy name is named upon us," *i.e.*, Thou hast revealed Thyself to us as God of salvation: "Lay us not down," *i.e.*, let us not sink.—*Keil.*

"*Leave us not;*" lit. lay us not down. Jeremiah evidently had in mind the magnificent words of Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.—*Speaker's Commentary.* (See *Noticeable Topic*, "*Triumphant Prayer*," on vers. 7–9.

Vers. 8, 9. *Theme:* GOD'S SEEMING DISREGARD OF MAN. "O hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst Thou be as a stranger?" &c.

A sore perplexity that God appears to dwell so far off and so apart from human affairs. Appalling crises come and go, dreadful occurrences transpire in the nation, in the church, in the home, in individual life, and hearts are dismayed and paralysed, yet God appears not in Providence nor manifests Himself in grace. And this seeming disregard compels to the cry, "O hope of Israel," &c.

I. It contradicts God's character and name.

1. "*Hope.*" A name implying that Israel had learned to hope in Him when all else failed. That is the character God bears.

2. "*Saviour.*" He had saved, was THE Saviour: "Beside Him there was no Saviour." And men believed him to be so.

3. "*Mighty man.*" "Able to save to the uttermost." With great power He redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage. "Mighty to save." All revelation has declared God to be man's hope, man's Saviour, man's mighty Redeemer; and when God seems heedless, it covers His name with obscurity.

II. It baffles the godly soul. To Jeremiah it was painfully perplexing that "the hope of Israel, and its Saviour," should act towards His people thus: as

1. "*A stranger.*" Indifferent, therefore, having no acquaintance or sympathy with Israel, no knowledge of their distresses or needs; wholly unconcerned in their forlorn and imperilled state.

2. "*A wayfaring man.*" *Inconstant*, therefore: passing through the land instead of as of old, "Here will I dwell, for I have desired it;" alienated, no longer attached to the Holy Land and Temple; about to depart.

3. "A man that *cannot save.*" *Impotent*, therefore: the power of His arm gone, the zeal of His heart expired.

When the godly see God thus inactive for human weal and His people's rescue, faith trembles and the cry rises from amid terrifying gloom.

III. It leaves man in a deplorable case.

1. *His condition is distressing.* It is "a *time of trouble*," and in such a time, if "the Hope of Israel" forsake and fail him, he has "*no hope.*"

2. *His relief is urgent.* Without it man will sink and perish amid "trouble," which means peril. If the "Saviour" relieve him not, he has no helper, no salvation.

3. *His sole expectation is in God.* Man can turn nowhere else. These people have no other "hope" or "Saviour," or "mighty man." And, amid sore troubles, no appeal rises but to Him. If He be a "wayfaring man," and depart, doom rests on them!

IV. It arouses to wrestling prayer. It drove Jeremiah to God in earnest supplication: a good result.

1. *Expostulating.* "*Why* shouldst Thou be? *why* shouldst Thou be?" He could not rest amid such contradictions. He went "with boldness to the throne of grace," and entreated God to arise and help.

2. *Protesting.* "Yet Thou, O Lord, *art* in the midst of us," although Thou art *as* a stranger and wayfaring man. He puts God in mind of precious *facts*, and bases firm arguments and appeals thereon. "We are *called by Thy name*," help and save Thine own.

3. *Entreating.* "Leave us not!" "Thou *art* in our midst; be not even as a wayfarer; abide with us!" He would detain God. "I will not let Thee go!" "Constrain Him, saying, Abide with us!" When thus entreated, *Jesus "went in to tarry with them."* (See *Addenda* on ver. 8, "*God's withdrawings.*")

Ver. 9. *Theme:* A PRAYER FOR ALL SEASONS. "Leave us not!"

God sometimes hides Himself from us, as a friend withdraws when slighted, or a father when grieved.

I. *Here is a prayer* for all seasons. There is "a time for everything," but every time is for this. This prayer should rise in—

1. *Times of joy.* Need pillar of cloud *by day.* Our prosperity will ruin us if God be not with us. Uzziah fell "when he was strong" (2 Chron. xxvi. 16).

2. *Times of adversity.* 3. *Times of labour.* 4. *Times of perplexity,* &c.

II. *Here is a prayer* for all saints.

1. All *need* to pray thus. For all deserve to be abandoned.

2. All *must* pray thus. For all desire continuances of His presence.

3. All *will* pray thus. For all know the bitterness of soul consequent upon His withdrawal.

III. *Here is a prayer* always answered. If it come from sincere and penitential hearts.

1. Always answered, *for it is according to His will.* He delights to remain with His own.

2. Always answered, *for it honours His name.* It implies that we know and prize His presence.—*Sermon Framework.*

Ver. 10. *Theme:* RECKLESS WANDERERS REJECTED. "Thus have they loved to wander . . . the Lord doth not accept them," &c. [On the reference of "*thus* have they," &c., see Homily on Section 10–16, *supra.*] "Thus" means *just so.* Rashi suggests, in addition to those given in *Section* by Lange, that the point of comparison is, "For as determined as I am to punish them, *just so* they love to continue their offence." (See *Addenda* on ver. 10.)

I. A covenant people heedless of their privileges.

1. *Having Jehovah as their God.* Their conception of what their God was to them is given in vers. 7–9.

2. *Having bounteous blessings.* In their country, "a goodly land;" their social advantages, their spiritual distinctions.

3. *Having assured prosperity and peace.* God had covenanted their security against foes and enjoyment of unmeasured good.

Yet withal they depreciated their eminent blessings.

II. A heedless people yielding to inconstancy. "They loved to wander," &c.

1. *There was within them a delight in backsliding.* A "*love*" of it. See *Notes* on chap. ii. 23, 24, 25; ver. 31.

2. *Upon their inclination to apostasy they put no restraint.* "They have not refrained their feet." We may have wrong dispositions, may "love to wander," yet are called to control, and check, and correct our wrong desires and delights. But these surrendered themselves unrestrained, "followed the devices and desires of their own hearts."

III. An inconstant people rejected from God's favour. "Therefore the Lord doth not accept them."

1. *Even though the prophet pleaded for them.* As he did in vers. 7–9, as an *intercessor,* yet God refused (ver. 11). (See Notes on chap. vii. 16; xi. 14.)

2. *Even though they themselves might cry to Him* (ver. 12). There is a time when God's mercy closes.

IV. A rejected people consigned to sore distress.

1. *Buried memories of sin will be recalled against them.* God "will *remember* their iniquity," which He would have let remain in oblivion had they sought Him opportunely. Oh, to find all that God recollects against us arrayed for our doom!

2. *Due recompense of sin will be brought upon them.* He "will *visit* their sins." Fain would He have made "grace much more to abound where sin abounded." But repudiation of His goodness brings the inevitable stroke of anger: it is "the wrath of the Lamb."

Ver. 11. See *Notes and Homilies* on chap. vii. 16; xi. 14.

Ver. 12. See *Notes and Homilies* on chap. ii. ver. 28; and *Homilies on Sections* 14–28; also *Outlines* on chap. xi. 11, 14, 15.

Theme: FASTING RENDERED OFFENSIVE. "When they fast I will not hear their cry; . . . but I will consume them," &c.

Hypocrites, void of all sincerity, yet professed to be true worshippers of God, and by external acts wished to prove themselves to be so. They profaned the name of God when they thus grossly dissembled with Him.

I. Pious demeanour is not what God desires, but faith.

1. *God abominates a double and false heart*, and the greater the fervour hypocrites display in external rites, the more they provoke Him.

2. *Fasting is observed as giving intensity to prayer.* Reverted to when there is danger, or when there appears evidence of God's wrath, or when we are under heavy affliction.

3. *They who "fast" professedly avow that they deprecate God's disfavour.* It is an *acknowledgment of conscious guilt*, and a *declaration of penitence.*

4. *But God values not outward appearance.* He regards the faith of the heart. Pretentious penitence must be specially offensive to Him.

III. Fasting is not in itself a religious duty, but a mere index to a humble spirit.

1. *What is intended by fasting?* (*a.*) That there may be greater alacrity in prayer. (*b.*) That it may be an evidence of humility in confessing sins. (*c.*) As indicative of a purpose to subdue lust.

2. *What is fasting apart from these intents?* (*a.*) A frivolous exercise. (*b.*) A profanation of God's worship. (*c.*) It provokes God's wrath as being a superstition by which His worship is polluted. Fastings are not only without benefit, except when prayers are added, but they incur Divine displeasure unless indicating a humble and reverent spirit.

III. No value is in fasting to merit God's favour.

Papists seek to pacify God by fasting as by a sort of satisfaction, deem it a work of merit and a kind of expiation.

Yet though hypocrites joined prayer to their fasting they were rejected (comp. Matt. xvii. 21; Mark ix. 29; 1 Cor. vii. 5). There was no sincerity in their hearts, but only an outward appearance, a mere disguise.

But God regards the heart, and only sincerity pleases Him.

IV. Mocking profanation was intolerable, and should be punished. "I will consume them," &c.

1. God shows Himself armed with various kinds of punishment: "sword, famine, pestilence."

2. He forewarns that they who had provoked Him should surely suffer. From the impending destructions none could deliver himself.

3. God does not disregard or reject religious signs, but when what they signify is separated from them, there is then an intolerable profanation.—*Arranged from Calvin:* see *Commentary in loc.* (See *Addenda* on ver. 12, "*Fasting offensive.*"

Ver. 14. *Theme:* ASSURED PEACE. "I will give you assured peace in this place."

Hitzig and Graf. render the sentence, "I will give you peace and continuance," &c.; *Septuagint*, "truth and peace;" *Vulgate and Targum*, "true peace;" *Syriac*, "peace and security;" *Lit.* "peace of truth." Real and lasting peace, not delusive, not evanescent.

1. Human life wants it.

Sin robbed man of it. All sinned; and wicked, like troubled sea, which cannot rest. Oh, how man craves for peace!

1. *Uncertainty troubles our life.* Transient hours of repose come to us, but tumult rushes in. No calculating on restful days and years. Want "*assured* peace" in this uncertain world.

2. *Delusions embitter our heart.* We have heeded false prophets, have "looked for peace, and behold trouble." Seems no reliance on any promising thing. Mocked at every turn. It is not gay and fleeting enjoyments we need, but something "*assured.*"

3. *Misgivings weary our souls.* Are we safe, *saved?* Is *death nearing?* Is

God propitious? Have we a "*right* to enter through the gates into the city?" "'Tis a point I long to know," &c. *The soul asks certitude*, not conjecture, nor even hope, but "full assurance," firm anchorage, "a title clear," "strong consolation," "the peace of God which shall keep our hearts and minds." The cry of humanity is for "assured peace," which will not elude, will never be lost.

"Oh where can rest be found,
Rest for the weary soul!"

II. God alone can give it. "I will give you assured peace."

1. *Peace is not a human commodity, but a Divine boon.* Man cannot buy it of man, he must beg it of God. Priests cannot bestow it on penitents, sinners must get it direct from heaven.

2. *Peace comes only to divinely-prepared hearts.* It cannot dwell where sin lurks, sin unrepented or unforgiven. "*Being justified* by faith, we have peace with God." "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." "*In Me* ye have peace."

3. *Peace is specifically the Saviour's benefaction.* For He only can remedy the evils, and remove the impurities which ruin man's peace. "My peace I give unto you—let not your hearts be troubled."

III. Lying voices offer it. "Prophecy lies."

1. *False prophets preach peace still.* In *our churches* promising it through ceremonies, confession, righteous works, &c. In *pleasure's scenes*, assuring the gay and frivolous of satisfaction, &c.

2. *Beguiled dupes are ensnared still.* Won by false promises souls follow. But "destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known."

3. *Yet assured peace is available still.* May be found by all. "Come unto me, all ye that labour," &c., "Learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your soul."

Vers. 13–16. *Theme:* RUINOUS PROPHESYINGS.

How lone the voice which bewails the currency of religious frauds and ecclesiastical deceits! None but Jeremiah's cry of lament over his beguiled people rose to God. Lying prophets were *and are* more in number than the faithful witnesses and preachers of truth. The world "believes a lie," because it loves not the truth: and, upon this prevalent mood of self-deception and credulity, scheming priests and plausible preachers are ready to trade, saying, "Peace, peace; where there is no peace."

I. Delusive declarations. "Behold the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place" (ver. 13).

1. This kind of preaching had *early and evil origin:* "The serpent said, Ye shall not surely die, but your eyes shall be opened, &c." (Gen. iii. 4, 5).

2. *Modern reproductions are rife.* Priestly teaching of the saving value of sacraments, &c. Broad theology which minimises human sin and spiritual peril. A subtle Socinianism which denies man's fall or need of redemption. Annihilationism, which destroys a hereafter for the unchristian soul.

II. Repudiated preachers. "I sent them not, neither have I commended them, neither spake unto them" (ver. 14).

1. *Pleasant preaching may be in God's esteem "lies."* The people liked it, but Jehovah denounced it.

2. *Plausible prophets do not always have authority for their messages.* Because a preacher teaches what men *want to hear*, and *flock to learn*, he does not on that account possess Divine warrant. Popularity is not a seal of authority. Indeed the *truth most unwelcome, and the preacher most deserted*, may have the highest sanction. "Who hath believed our report," &c. Jeremiah was now deserted for these plausible prophets: yet *who* preached Divine truth?

III. Deceptions disclosed. "They prophesy unto you a false vision, and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their hearts" (ver. 14).

Thus are these delusive teachings *disowned by God*, they have *no origin in Him*, neither *in prayerful contemplation of His Word*, neither in any *spiritual illumination*; they are *traced to the dark caverns of a deceitful heart.*

1. *"Visions and divinations" may have a bad origin.* A preacher may be "clear" and "clever" in his presentation of doctrine, but his "visions" may be "false," and his "divination" a "deceit." Does he "prophesy *in My name?*

2. *It is possible for the human "heart" to suggest falsehood.* Yes; the "heart" may forge a "deceit," and thus *impose upon the prophet himself;* and the fancy or theory he has framed within himself may so enamour him that he may come to believe it true and authoritative. Then he will in turn *impose upon heedless hearers,* who desire "a thing of nought" rather than the serious message of God.

IV. Retributive ruin.

1. *On deceivers* (ver. 15). The very evils from which they decoyed men's just fears should come upon themselves. Forbearing to warn men of the coming "sword" (see Ezek. xxxiii.), that sword should smite the faithless watchman himself.

2. *On the deceived* (ver. 16). Who were willingly beguiled (comp. v. 31. see *supra,* ver. 10). Men still "turn their ears from the truth, and are turned into fables." But they do not escape the threatenings of the truth because they "believe a lie." Self-deception is self-ruin.

Comments—

"Although preachers lead their hearers astray, yet the hearers are not thus excused. But when they allow themselves to be led astray, the blind and those who guide them fall together into the ditch" (Luke vi. 39).—*Cramer.*

"The false prophets are thus described as deceiving the people in three ways—(1) by asserting that they had seen a vision; (2) by using conjuring tricks; (3) by professing to consult these small idols [*Elil;* see Lit. Crit. on "thing of naught"], in the same way that they divined by the Teraphim (Comp. Zech. x. 2, where these three modes of divination occur again, only the Teraphim takes the place of the Elilim. Probably they were much the same). All these three methods the prophet declares to be *the deceit of their heart, i.e.,* not self-deceit, but a fraud suggested by their heart or mind, *i.e.,* a wilful and intentional fraud."—*Speaker's Com.*

"To Hitzig it seems surprising that, in describing the punishment which is to fall on seducers and seduced, there should not be severer judgment, in words at least, levelled against the seducers as being those involved in deeper guilt; whereas the very contrary is the case in the Hebrew text. But it was necessary to set before the people the terrors of this judgment in all their horror, in order not to fail of effect."—*Keil.*

Ver. 17. *"Let mine eyes run down with tears,"* &c. See Homilies on Chaps. ix. 1, xiii. 17, *supra.*

"The virgin daughter of my people," see on Chap. viii. 21, &c. In Oriental households virgins are carefully secluded and guarded; so had God watched over and protected Judah.

"Broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow," see on Chap. x. 19.

"Those cities are called '*virgins*' which never came into a conqueror's hands. In the same sense the prophet here calls Jerusalem a 'virgin,' because she had been hitherto under God's immediate protection, and preserved by Him from all attempts of her enemies (Comp. Amos. v. 2). The dissolution of a government or body politic, is called a '*breach,*' by way of allusion to the breaking or disjointing of the limbs of a human body (see Chap. viii. 21, Lam. ii. 13)."—*W. Lowth.*

Ver. 18. *Theme:* THE WOES OF WAR.

I. Scenes on the field of battle. "If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword."

II. Miseries within the besieged city. "If I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine!" Yes, and *heart sick* with grief over sons, husbands, and fathers, slain.

III. Captives carried into alien scenes. "Yea, both the prophet and the priest [even those, and therefore the people, whom the conqueror would be less likely to leave] go about into a land that they know not." "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion."

Note on *"go about into a land that they know not."* These words are

variously rendered (See Lit. Crit. on verse), and variously interpreted. Graf and Keil suggest for "go about" the meaning "*beg their way.*" A. V. in margin gives "*make merchandise.*" But Rosenmüller and Umbreit give the interpretation that these prophets and priests move to and fro, go over their own desolated country (Judea) baffled and bewildered and impotent; "*they wander about it, the land, and know not what to do.*" But the simplest meaning is, they go into exile in a strange land.

Ver. 19. *Theme:* PATRIOTIC PRAYERS IRREPRESSIBLE.

See *Addenda* on ver. 19, "*Wrestling prayers.*" Jehovah had prohibited Jeremiah's intercession *for* His people (ver. 11); had wholly discouraged all propitiation *by* His people (ver 12). What then? nothing could be done by man for them, nor aught by themselves for themselves. It is in bold desperation that the prophet now besieges God on the plea of *His* gracious interest in, and covenant relationship to, Judah. Can it be that there is "no healing" even in Jehovah for "the virgin daughter" on whom has fallen "a very grievous blow" (ver. 17).

*** For homiletic arrangement of this and following verses, see section, vers. 17–32, *supra.* Also Homily on chap. viii. 15.

I. Agonising inquiries addressed to God. Is there no room for hope, *no place left for Judah and Zion within Divine pity?* Are we abandoned to our miseries without any alleviation available; *smitten by Thee*, yet "no healing" procurable, *none possible?*

II. Desolated hopes arrayed before God.

1. *Our expectations misled us.* Ill-prepared for such a reverse of our hopes and desires.

2. *Our desolation amazes us.* "There is *no* good;" not one solace or respite shows itself, blank misery. "Behold trouble!" It rises upon our gaze, and we are terrified!

III. Astonishment expressed at the

1. *After so much grace from God.* Judah cherished; Zion long beloved.

2. *After frequent healings by God.* For oft He had smitten and then *bound up.*

3. *Now utterly loathed and abandoned.* Yet God *can* be severe. It will *amaze* those who calculated upon His love, and trifled with it.

Ver. 20. *Theme:* SIN ACKNOWLEDGED.

To a right acknowledgment of our iniquity, and in order that sin may be pardoned, there are required three things—

I. Contrition. Iniquity truly and duly deplored. A poignant sense of the *evil of sin* in itself, and *our evil state* in having committed sin. A real grief for the wrong we have done God, and the woe we have merited on ourselves.

II. Confession. Which should be *unfeigned, self-abhorrent, lamentable, specific, unreserved.* The heart should utter itself in our words, and deep shame should fill our souls as we prostrate ourselves before the most Holy God.

III. Conversion. Repentance should issue in reformation. Forsaking the sin we acknowledge and lament, we should hereafter live a righteous, sober, and godly life. "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Moved by *gratitude* to God for being "ready to forgive," and constrained by *love* to the Atoning Mediator by whose redemption we may escape both guilt and its penalty, our afterlife should be humble, obedient, devoted, and holy. See *Addenda* on ver. 20, "*Sin acknowledged.*" Comp. Homily on chap. iii. 25.

Note.—The "and" is not in the Hebrew, and corrupts the sense. National sin is the sin of the "*fathers*" perpetuated generation after generation by the children. When thus successive opportunities for repentance had been rejected—for each generation had its own probation—the nation is ripe for chastisement.—*Speaker's Com.*

Theme: DREADING GOD'S ABHORRENCE. "Do not abhor us, for Thy name's sake."

The occasion of the prayer (vers. 2–6). Prayer for removal of calamity (vers. 7–9). Though visited with judgment and threatened, the false prophets preached peace (vers. 13, 14). The prophet, however, continued to plead with God.

I. The petition.

1. *These words imply that it is possible for creatures once the objects of Divine favour to become the objects of Divine displeasure.*

2. *The solicitude of the prophet indicated how real and near those Divine judgments were.* He was commanded not to pray that the threatened judgment should not be inflicted, but was assured the sword and famine should overtake them (ver. 15). Where impiety and irreligion prevail among a people favoured with religious advantages, Divine abhorrence will certainly express itself in punishment.

3. *There is nothing which godly men more vehemently dread and deprecate than that God should abhor and reject a people once distinguished by His favour and by religious privileges.* Jeremiah knew his people must be scattered, but he dreaded nothing so much as their being utterly cast off. Against this he prayed, "Do not abhor us, Lord, &c.

II. The argument used as enforcing his petition.

"Do not abhor us, for *thy name's sake.*" This argument has been used with the Most High before. When God thinks to destroy the children of Israel, Moses pleaded what God had done for them (Exodus xxxii. 11–13). Joshua also pleaded, "What wilt Thou do for Thy great Name?" (Josh. viii. 9). "Should the Egyptians say," &c. &c. This argument Jeremiah used to support his petition. God had made a covenant with His servant Jacob—if, then, Jacob had been abhorred so as to be utterly cast off—how could that economy be maintained? "Remember, break not Thy covenant with us, *for Thy name's sake.*"

God's name is His *character*, including all the glorious perfections that encompass it. Some of the perfections, considered apart from others, would cause only fear when our guilt as individuals or the guilt of communities is realised. If the prophet had dwelt only upon the holiness, justice, and power of God when he considered the guilt of his country, he would have had no encouragement to pray, and if we dwelt only upon some attributes, we shall be more likely to sink into despair than to be encouraged with hope. But there are other perfections in the divine attributes, such as boundless mercy, unparalleled love, infinite wisdom, and inviolable faithfulness.

This argument may be used in prayer under personal distress, and under general calamity either endured or apprehended.

1. *Under personal distress*, to be considered as coming from guilt or from particular trouble, and in both cases can the name of God furnish us with a suitable or a powerful argument in prayer.

(1.) *We may use it under a sense of guilt*, either when first convinced of sin or when we may have wounded our conscience. A life spent without the fear of God, in open disaffection to and rebellion against Him, calls for vengeance. The glory of God requires that He should resist such impiety and manifest His displeasure against it. He might justly abhor us and utterly reject us. But His name affords us a plea. "God is Love," He delighteth in mercy. He is the Lord God merciful and gracious. This is in perfect harmony with the perfections of God.

2. *The believer may adopt it under particular trouble and the tribulations through which he may pass.* The covenant of grace affords encouragement to use it. "If thy children forsake my law," &c. &c. "Do not abhor us." If Thou art pleased to chastise us, cast us not off—let all Thy glorious perfections of mercy, pardon, wisdom, and faithfulness be displayed in supporting, sanctifying, and in over-ruling all things for our good. "Do not abhor us, *for Thy name's sake*," &c.

(2.) This argument may be used by the righteous *under general calamities; calamities experienced or apprehended.*

1. *Under national trouble.* Such were the circumstances under which the prophet presented the prayer. A dearth was experienced—the swarm of the Chaldeans was threatened. He prayed that the sheep might not be abandoned. "Do not abhor us."

Under national calamity the name of God affords *encouragement for prayer.*

The godly at such times, when they can see that prevailing iniquity calls for vengeance, though professing submission, yet find the *name of God* a plea.

2. *This plea may be used by the godly when apprehensive of spiritual judgments upon spiritual account.*

There is nothing more offensive to God than a lukewarm spirit. "I would that thou wert either cold or hot," &c. Now where lukewarmness prevails, the Spirit of God will be grieved and be withdrawn; the prayer is then most important, "*Do not abhor,*" &c., "Take not Thy Holy Spirit," &c.

3. *It is a plea that may be used in reference to churches at large.* How much is there in Christendom to be deplored! How much that is religious only in name! How little Christian charity among different denominations! Though it is admitted that efforts are made to do good by churches of different denominations, and upon these efforts God has smiled, yet these evils must be offensive to Him who prayed that His Church might be kept from the evil that was in the world; and we may fear the expression of Divine displeasure until they are removed.

We learn from the subject *that the proper plea to be used in all our prayers is the name of God.* His mercy and grace displayed as harmonising with holiness and justice through the mediation of Jesus Christ. In our own name, as a ground of righteousness, we can never be accepted.

If God hears and answers prayer, it must be in a way that will be for His glory. And though in some measure His glory may require judgment, yet if the prayer is offered in reliance upon the mediation of Christ, the mercy and faithfulness of God assure us of acceptance. "Mercy and truth meet together—righteousness and peace," &c.

And that prayer for others should be incessant. "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much."—*Anon.*

Ver. 21. *Theme:* THE ULTIMATE ARGUMENT WITH GOD FOR MERCY. See *Addenda* on ver. 21. "*Do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory.*" Nothing may be found to extenuate man's spiritual criminality, so heinous may be his sin, as was Judah's. Nothing acceptable or propitiatory may exist in his self-mortifications and oblations (ver. 12). His guilt and insincerity may even justify God's refusal of intercession on his behalf (ver. 11). Yet there remain the highest arguments still by which to plead with God, viz., His NAME, His HONOUR, and His COVENANT.

I. Explanation of the language.

1. *God's name:* it was a *pledge of pardon* (Exod. xxxiv. 6). But more, God's name was *identified with His people;* hence what befell them would reflect credit or discredit on God. If Thou dost "*abhor us,*" Thy name as "*the God of Israel*" will be forfeit.

2. *God's honour:* "disgrace not the throne of Thy glory." Jerusalem, or the Temple wherein God dwelt there (chap. iii. 17), was God's glorious throne: if He suffered it to fall into the hands of heathen conquerors, it would be *disgraced,* and God's glory dishonoured.

3. *God's covenant:* He had chosen the race of Abraham, had pledged to David a lasting throne, had promised that Messiah should come of Judah. Though they, the guilty people, merited abhorrence, yet for the covenant's sake, spare them, that the Word of God may stand.

II. Application of the argument. Jeremiah turns from the people's evil state and deserts, and appeals to God's attributes.

1. *That God's name is a tower of defence for the guiltiest.* Not only may "the righteous run into it and be safe," but sinners may plead it as a basis of hope, as an argument for mercy (see ver. 7). Though nothing else can be found on which to rest prayer for Divine pity, yet God, who is the "Father of mercies," the "God of our salvation," and whom the only begotten Son has declared as the "*God who so loved the world,*" may be entreated *for His name's sake* to spare "sinners, even the chief."

2. *That God's glory is involved in His administration of mercy.* He would

"disgrace His throne" did He allow the enemy to triumph and despoil His temple. If Satan vanquishes the Church, or wrests a sinner from the grace of Christ, the High Majesty of Heaven is dishonoured. True, we may *merit abandonment*, as did profane Jerusalem, yet "let not the enemy prevail"—where sin abounds, grace shall much more abound!

3. *That God's covenant outlives man's disloyalty.* Man may violate his part in that covenant: yet shall the Righteous and Gracious God *therefore* break His word? No! Man's falsity cannot obliterate God's graciousness. The infinitely pitiful Jehovah, who keepeth covenants and never faileth, will still remember His promises. He has assured of "salvation even to the uttermost," pledged Himself "in nowise to cast out;" and on that covenant we may ever rest. Calvin remarks, "God did, according to the common apprehension of men, abolish the covenant by which the Jews thought Him to be bound to them; and yet He remained true; for His truth shone forth at length from darkness, after the time of exile was completed." (See *Noticeable Topic* on ver. 21. "*God's covenant an argument in prayer.*")

Ver. 22. *Theme:* THE LONE HOPE OF MAN IN MISERY.

The misery was from the "dearth" (ver. 1–6); the dearth was consequent upon Judah's iniquity (ver. 7). And that iniquity consisted largely in God's people turning from Him to "the vanities of the Gentiles."

I. To choose others for God is to court hopeless misery. Not one of these "*vanities* of the Gentiles" could alleviate the calamities which had come upon them through their desertion of Jehovah.

1. *Sin will entail appalling disaster.*

2. *In disaster we shall need help and deliverance.*

3. *Deliverance cannot come from the "vanities"* for which we have surrendered God.

Therefore we create for ourselves a desolate future.

II. No secondary causes can suffice us in calamity. "Showers" do indeed fall from "the heavens," but it is God who "*gives*" them.

1. *Behind all sources of comfort God dwells.*

2. *If He be alienated He dries up these sources of comfort.*

3. *Hence to look to these sources and ignore the Divine spring is to ensure mocking disappointment.* (Comp. chaps. ii. 12, 13, iii. 23.)

III. God Himself is man's true need. Read the words — "Art Thou not Jehovah our God?"

1. *Our one only Saviour* (Isaiah xlv. 21–25).

2. *The Creator of all the channels of comfort.* "Thou hast made all these things"—the heavens with their showers.

3. *The hope of man in the day of his distress.*

For He who hath torn can heal; He who hath impoverished with "drought" can replenish with luxury. Ye shall *receive of the Lord's hand double for all your sins.*

IV. The attitude of a troubled soul. "Therefore we will wait upon Thee."

1. *Humbly:* for sin lies at the root of man's distress.

2. *Patiently:* for after long rejection of God we must "wait" His time for relief.

3. *Trustfully:* for grace will not be denied any lowly suppliant; and faith will win the blessing sought.

See *Addenda* on verse. *Man's lone hope.*

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER XIV.

Topic: CONCERNING THE DEARTH (vers. 1–9).

See *Addenda* on ver. 1. The events here recorded most probably gave occasion for the fast referred to in chap. xxxvi. 9. "A more true description of an Oriental drought in its leading circumstances and effects we have never yet seen." We proceed to show from the words of the prophet the dire effects of the drought, and by constant inference the folly of forsaking God.

I. The effects of drought upon inanimate creation.

1. *The pits were empty.* Some of these were natural hollows in the hard rocks and in the caves where evaporation was less speedy. Others were dykes and cisterns, the works of man. *But neither nature nor art could afford supplies when God dealt with them in His judgments.*

2. *The ground was chapt.* Kitto says, "After long drought in the East, particularly where the soil is rich and hard, the ground splits into wide and deep fissures." These are earth's wounds for man's sin. Mute mouths crying to Heaven for pity. The lips of earth suffering, waiting for a drop of water to relieve the torment of an awful thirst.

3. *There was no grass.* The world is complex, man is complex,—God is complex. In complex systems harmony is essential to life,—discord is ruin. The shower can do nothing good without the sun. The sun can only scorch if the rain fall not. Earth can produce no fruit unless both sun and shower combine to aid. The sun cannot say to the dewdrop, "I have no need of thee," &c.

II. The effects of drought upon the animal creation.

1. *The hind calved in the field and forsook it.* The fact that the hind was in the field proves that pasture had failed on the higher lands. It was not unusual for the hind to drop her calf by reason of fright or grief (Ps. xxix. 9). The maternal instinct in these creatures being strong, it was very unusual for them to forsake their young, and can only be accounted for by the entire failure of the mother to obtain food or drink.

2. *The wild asses were in intense agony on account of hunger.* These creatures were capable of great endurance, and needed but little to sustain life. The language of ver. 6 shows to what a desperate condition even such hardy creatures had been reduced.

III. The effects of drought upon the human creation.

1. *The husbandmen were ashamed.* The earth they had cultivated had brought forth no fruit, and they were unable to alter its condition. As they looked upon the hard, chapt, barren earth, they covered their heads in shame and grief.

2. *The people generally were languishing.* Ver. 2 shows that places of public resort were scenes of sadness. Their drooping condition found expression in one general cry of anguish.

3. *The nobles were threatened with death through thirst.* They sent servants and children in search of water, but they returned with empty pitchers.

> "The hot blood stands in each glassy eye;
> And, 'Water, O God!' is the only cry."

"Their tongues are parched and rough, and cling to the roofs of their mouths; their lips are black and shrivelled, and their eyeballs red with heat, and sometimes a dimness comes over them which makes them stagger with faintness. There is not one in all that multitude who probably would not have given all he possessed in the world, and parted even with a limb, . . . for one cool draught of water."—*Kitto.*

> "'Twas thirst! 'twas maddening thirst alone,
> That wrung my spirit's inmost groan.
> Hunger is bitter, but the worst
> Of human pangs—the most accursed
> Of want's fell scorpions—is THIRST."—*Cook.*

IV. The effects of drought on the devout heart of Jeremiah.

1. *He regarded it as a chastisement for sin.* The sin of forsaking God and trusting in idols who are unable to deliver. "We have sinned." Our iniquities testify against us.

2. *He regarded God as their only hope.* All hope in Israel was gone, and his only plea was—"For Thy name's sake."

3. *He earnestly prayed for mercy.* That God would abide with them and not leave them That God would remove the trouble. His prayer was vain, since it was unaccompanied by the repentance of the people.

Application:

1. In forsaking God, they forsook the fountain.
2. Earth's broken cisterns cannot be a substitute for the Divine.
3. Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

—*W. Whale.*

Topic: GOD'S WITHDRAWINGS FROM HIS PEOPLE, AND THEIR EXERCISE UNDER THEM (ver. 8).

See *Addenda*, ver 8. *God's withdrawals.* Prophet laments the grievous drought and want of rain, as a token of God's withdrawing His presence. He deprecates God's judgments, and especially that terrible one—God lost to His Church and people: "*Why shouldst Thou be a stranger,*" &c. Consider—

I. When it may be said God withdraws, and behaves as a stranger to His people.

1. *When He withholds His wonted acts of kindness to them.* Sees them in trouble and comes not to their relief. Of this the Church complains (Isa. lxiii. 15). See also complaint of Gideon (Judges vi. 13).

2. *When He threatens to remove from them the signs and symbols of His presence*—the Word and Sacraments; when He permits their enemies to combine and carry on their plans for that purpose (Lam. v. 9).

3. *When, though continuing the ordinances and sacraments, the Lord renders them profitless* (Mal. ii. 2). When ministers are straitened in preaching and the people in hearing, when all is cold and dead.

4. *When the Divine providences are adverse.* Outward mercies denied them, temporal calamities allowed. So when Zion's captivity was prolonged (Isa. xlix. 14).

5. *When He denies them access to Himself.* Breaks off His wonted correspondence with them. They seek Him in private and public ordinances, but cannot find Him. Job's language is theirs (Job xxiii. 3). Also Jeremiah's (Lam. iii. 8).

II. The reasons why the Lord deals thus with His people. Infinite goodness cannot take delight in thus afflicting. There must be a cause. In general, sin is the cause (Is. lix. 2). As—

1. *When they fall into gross sin and bring reproach upon religion* (Isa. i. 13, 14). Or, as David's case (2 Sam. xii. 14; comp. Ps. li. 11).

2. *When they become earthly minded.* Prefer pleasure of sense (Isa. lvii. 17). The Gergesenes preferred their swine to Christ; then He turned His back and departed from their coast (Matt. viii. 28).

3. *When they become slothful and formal in duty.* Do not stir themselves up to seek God's face (Isa. lxiv. 7; Cant. iii. 1).

4. *When they neglect, or slight the Mediator*, by whom we have access to God; either by not looking to Him for strength to perform our duties, or by making a Saviour of our duties, and so putting them in the place of Christ.

5. *When they sin under, or after, great afflictions.* Though these were appointed to reclaim them (Isa. lvii. 17).

6. *When they do not cherish and entertain the influences of the Holy Spirit* (Cant. v. 2, 3, 6, 7).

7. *When they grow hardened and impenitent under provocation.* No due sense of their own sins, nor of the sins of the land they lived in (Hos. v. 15).

III. When it may be said we are properly exercised under such a painful dispensation.

1. *When we are truly sensible of our loss, and that our sin is the cause of it.* Mourn after the Lord, as Israel in the days of Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 2).

2. *When we place all our happiness in God's favour and presence.* Every comfort regarded as empty without God, regarding Him as "the Hope of Israel," and our only desire (Ps. lxxiii. 25).

3. *When we engage all the powers of our souls to seek after God* (Ps. cxix. 10). For God takes particular notice of those who do (Jer. xxx. 21).

4. *When we diligently embrace every opportunity for finding an absent God*, and use every appointed means (Cant. iii. 2).

5. *When we wrestle with Him in prayer to return.* Use every argument, as here the prophet did. He pleads (*a*) *The glory of His name:* "for Thy name's sake." (*b*) *Their helpless state without Him:* "Oh, the hope," &c. (*c*) *His former kindness to them:* "the Saviour in time of trouble." (*d*) *His power:* "Why shouldst Thou," &c. (ver. 9). (*e*) *The outward symbols of His presence:* "Thou art in our midst." (*f*) *The covenant relation:* "we are called by Thy name."

6. *When we are not satisfied with the best means, unless we find God in them.* David was not content with the tabernacle, ark, sacrifices, passover; but, in midst of all, cried for God (Ps. lxxxiv. 2).

IV. Whence it is that the Lord, being as a stranger to His people, occasions them so much concern.

1. *Because of the incomparable happiness arising from the enjoyment of His presence.* All blessedness comes with His presence, and when He withdraws we may cry out with Micah (Judges xviii. 24).

2. *Because of the sad effects attending the loss of His presence.* Great darkness (Lam. iii. 2), much deadness (John xi. 21), disability for duty (Ps. lxxxvii. 4, xl. 12; John xv. 5), barrenness (John xv. 6), exposure to danger and enemies (Numb. xiv. 9), distress when remembering former blessings (Ps. lxxvii. 3), melancholy thoughts of death and judgment (Ps. xxiii. 4), the fear of being entirely rejected (Ps. lxxvii. 9, 10, cxix. 8).

Infer:

(1.) *There are but few true seekers of God among us.* Many are troubled for other trifling losses, but few can say with David (Ps. xxx. 7).

(2.) *The misery of those who are far from God now, and may be deprived of His presence for ever* (Ps. lxxiii. 27). Ungodly men desire not His presence (Job xxi. 14). Their choice will be their punishment (Matt. xxv. 41).

(3.) *The sad case of those whom God forsakes, never to return again*—as with Saul (1 Sam. xvi. 14). The Lord preserve us from this great woe, and grant us enjoyment of His presence here and in heaven!—*Hannum.*

Topic: TRIUMPHANT PRAYER (vers. 7–9).

See *Addenda* on ver. 8, "*Intercessory Prayer.*" Expositors have differed as to whether the drought which forms the basis of this prayer was a literal one, or is the prophet's way of putting the sore calamities that had fallen on Israel. But throughout Scripture, the metaphor of the "rain that cometh down from heaven and watereth the earth" is the symbol for God's Divine gift of His Spirit; and the picture of "a dry and thirsty land where no water is" is the appropriate sign of the soul and the Church void of the Divine presence.

I. The mysterious contradiction between the ideal of Israel and the actual condition of things. Recur to the historical event upon which this text is based, "The Lord thy God giveth thee a good land; a land full of brooks and water, rivers and depths" (Deut. viii. 9); and the fulfilment is this—a land full of misery for want of the thing promised! So also, the ancient charter of Israel's existence was that God should dwell in the midst of them: but things are as if the perennial presence promised had been changed into visits, short and far

between (ver. 8). Two ideas conveyed: *the brief transitory visits*, with long dreary stretches of absence between them; and the *indifference of the visitant*, as a man who pitches his tent for a night, caring little for the people among whom he tarries the while. More: instead of the perpetual energy of the Divine aid promised to Israel, it looks as if Thou art "a mighty man astonied," &c.—a Samson with his locks shorn.

The IDEAL was: *Perpetual gifts, perpetual presence, perpetual energy.*

The REALITY is: *Parched places, fitful visitations*, and a *paralysis*, as it would appear, of all the ancient might. And *what was God's ideal for us, His Church?* "Lo, I am with you alway," &c. "Ye are the light of the world, salt of the earth." It sounds like irony rather than a promise! What *is* the Church? The Church at home does not keep pace numerically with the increase of population, while heathenism remains scarcely touched—all unconquered! "Why shouldst Thou be as a mighty man that cannot save?"

II. Our low and evil condition should lead to earnest inquiry as to its cause.

Prophet asks, "Why shouldst Thou leave us?"

1. The reason is *not in any variableness of that unalterable*, uniform, ever-present, ever-full, Divine *gift of God's Spirit to His Church*. We do not believe in an arbitrary sovereignty. The great reservoir is always full. If there be any changes in the fulness of our possession of the Divine Spirit, the *fault lies wholly within the region of the mutable and the human*, and not at all in the region of the perennial and the Divine.

2. The reason is *not in the failure of adaptation in God's Word and ordinances* for the great work they had to do.

3. The *fault lies here only:* "O LORD, OUR INIQUITIES TESTIFY AGAINST US," &c. We have to prayerfully, patiently, and honestly search after this cause, and not to look to possible variations and improvements in order and machinery, &c., but to recognise this as being the one sole cause that hinders,—*the slackness of our own hold on Christ's hand, and the feebleness and imperfection of our spiritual life* (ver. 7).

III. This consciousness of our evil condition and knowledge of the cause lead on to lowly penitence and confession. We err in being more ready, when awakened to a sense of wrong, to originate new methods of work, to begin with new zeal to gather in the outcasts into the fold; instead of *beginning with ourselves*, deepening our own Christian character, purifying our own hearts, and getting more of the life of God into our own spirits. Begin with *lowly abasement at His footstool*. Let us see that we are right in our own inmost hearts. To our knees and to confessions! "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly," &c. (Joel ii. 15–17).

IV. The triumphant confidence of believing prayer.

1. *Look at the substance of his petition.* "Do Thou it for Thy name's sake: leave us not." He does not prescribe what should be done, nor ask that calamity be taken away, but simply for the continual Divine presence and power.

2. *Look at these pleas with God as grounds of confidence for ourselves.* (*a*) *The name:* all the ancient manifestations of Thy character. Thy memorial with all generations. (*b*) *Israel's hope:* the confidence of the Church is fixed upon Thee; and Thou who hast given us Thy name hast become our hope. (*c*) *The perennial and essential relationship of God to His Church:* we belong to Thee, and Thou hast not ceased Thy care for us!

Lowly repentance should rise to the triumph of believing hope. The expectation is the precursor of the gift, and the prayer is the guarantee of the acceptance (vers. 20–22); for with that prayer on our lips, be sure that the old answer will come to us, "I will pour rivers of water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."—*A. M'Laren, B.A., "Christian World Pulpit."*

Theme: GOD'S COVENANT AN ARGUMENT IN PRAYER. *Text:* "*Remember, break not Thy covenant with us.*"

Suggestions: A "covenant" between God and man can be only an accommodating expression, since man cannot be regarded as properly qualified to make an agreement with Jehovah, being essentially unreliable and impotent. Strictly speaking, such a covenant is quite unconditional, and amounts to a promise (Gal. iii. 15 *sq.*), where ἐπαγγελία and διαθήκη are used almost as synonyms) or act of mere favour (Ps. lxxxix. 28, where חֶסֶד stands in parallelism with בְּרִית) on God's part. Thus, the assurance given by God after the flood that a like judgment should not be repeated, and that the recurrence of the seasons, and of day and night, should not cease, is called a covenant (Gen. ix.; Jer. xxxiii. 20). Generally, however, the form of a covenant is maintained by the benefits which God engages to bestow, being made by Him dependent upon the fulfilment of certain conditions which He imposes on man. Thus, the covenant with Abraham was conditioned by circumcision (Acts vii. 8), the omission of which was declared tantamount to a breach of the covenant (Gen. xvii.); the covenant with the priesthood, by zeal for God, His honour and service (Numb. xxv. 12, 13; Mal. ii. 4, 5); the covenant of Sinai, by the observance of the ten commandments (Ex. xxxiv. 27, 28). This last-mentioned covenant, which was renewed at different periods of Jewish history (Deut. xxix.; Josh. xxiv.; 2 Chron. xv., xxiii., xxix., xxxiv.; Ezra x.; Neh. ix., x.) is one of the two principal covenants between God and man, distinguished as Old and New (Jer. xxxi. 31–34; Heb. viii. 8–13). Compare Kitto.

I. That God should make a covenant with man is an act of unmerited grace.

II. That man should fail to keep the covenant accords with all human history.

III. That failure on man's part justifies God in withdrawing His covenanted goodness.

IV. Nevertheless, that a gracious covenant made by God, who knows our waywardness, might stand though man proved faithless.

V. Therefore, that God may be entreated to keep His part in a covenant even with a faithless people who have forfeited all right to His grace.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XV.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. CONCERNING THE DEARTH. A terrible drought had fallen upon the land; and the prophet's picture of it is, if one might say so, like some of Dante's in its realism, its tenderness, and in its terror. In the presence of a common calamity, all distinctions of class have vanished, and the nobles send their little ones to the water, and they come back with empty vessels and drooping heads, instead of with the gladness that used to be heard in the place of drawing of water. Far afield the ploughmen are standing among the cracked furrows gazing with despair at the brown chapped earth, and out in the field the very dumb creatures are sharing in the common sorrow, and the imperious loss of self-preservation overpowers and crushes the maternal instincts. "Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass." And on every hill top, where cooler air might be found, the once untamable wild asses are standing with open nostrils panting for air, their filmy eyes failing them, gazing for the rain that will not come."—*M'Laren.*

Ver. 2. "THE GATES THEREOF LANGUISH." "The gates of cities, being places of public resort, where courts of justice were held, and other common business transacted, seem here to be put for the persons that meet there; as when we say, 'The court is in mourning,' we mean the persons that attend the court or the king's palace. So in this passage we are to understand that

all the persons who appear in public are dejected, and put on black or mourning on account of the national distress."—*Dr. Blayney.*

"Or, that they look black and ghastly, and cast themselves down upon the ground out of grief and despair (comp. viii. 21; xiii. 18)."—*W. Louth.*

"As the gates were the usual place of concourse, the misery of the people would there show itself most plainly."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 3. "CAME TO THE PITS AND FOUND NO WATER." Jerusalem was supplied with water by two lakes or pools, called "the Upper Pool" and "the Lower Pool" (see Isa. vii. 3, xxii. 9), whence the water was conveyed into cisterns [here rendered "pits"] for the use of the city.—*W. Louth.*

Ver. 6. "SNUFFED UP THE WIND." "Asses, in defect of water, can continue long by drawing in the air; as Aristotle likewise testifieth of the goats of Cephalonia, that they drink not for divers days together, but instead thereof gape and suck in the fresh air."—*Trapp.*

Ver. 7. CONTRITE PRAYER.

"All powerful is the penitential sigh
Of true contrition. Like the placid wreaths
Of incense wafted from the righteous shrine,
Where Abel minister'd, to the blest seat
Of mercy, an accepted sacrifice,
Humiliation's conscious plaint ascends."
—*Hayes.*

Ver. 8. INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

"A good man's prayers
Will from the deepest dungeon climb to heaven's height,
And bring a blessing down."
—*Joanna Baillie.*

"Temporal blessings Heaven doth often share
Unto the wicked, at the good man's prayer."
—*Quarles.*

"But that from us aught should ascend to Heaven
So prevalent as to concern the mind
Of God high blest, or to incline His will,
Hard to belief may seem; yet this will prayer."
—*Milton.*

"A STRANGER IN THE LAND." "As none but citizens in old time had any political rights or privileges, a sojourner, however long might be his stay, naturally took little interest in the country where not choice but necessity had made him fix his dwelling."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 9. GOD'S WITHDRAWALS FROM HIS PEOPLE. "God does not always frown, lest we should be cast into despair; He does not always smile, lest we should be careless and presume."—*Owen.*

"A father's frowns are but the graver countenance of love."—*Cowper.*

"I know, as night and shadow are good for flowers, and moonlight and dews are better than continual sun, so is Christ's absence of special use, and it hath some nourishing virtue in it, and giveth sap to humility, and putteth an edge on hunger, and furnishes a fair occasion for faith to put forth her hand and lay hold on what she seeth not."—*Rutherford.*

"God sometimes hides Himself that we may cling the closer to Him and hang the faster upon Him. By withdrawing from His people, He prevents His people withdrawing from Him; and so by an affliction He prevents sin; for God to withdraw from me is but my affliction, but for me to withdraw from God, that is my sin; and, therefore, it were better for me that God should withdraw from me a thousand times than that I should once withdraw from God" (Heb. x. 38, 39).—*Brooks.*

Ver 10. "THEY LOVE TO WANDER."

"I have not kept Thy word,
And yet Thou biddest me to taste Thy love;
Shaming my faithless heart that ere could rove
From Thee, O gracious Lord.
"Shame wraps my heart around
Like morning gloom upon the mountains spread;
Indignant memory, avenger dread,
Deepens each restless wound."
—*Thomas W. Webb.*

Ver. 12. FASTING OFFENSIVE.

"When thou a fast wouldst keep,
Make not thy homage cheap
By publishing its signs to every eye;
But let it be between
Thyself and the Unseen;
So shall it gain acceptance from on high."
—*Barton.*

"Is this a fast—to keep
The larder lean, and clean
From fat of veals and sheep?
"Is it to quit the dish
Of flesh, yet still to fill
The platter high with fish?
"Is it to fast an hour,
Or ragged go, or show
A downcast look and sour?

"No! 'tis a fast to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat, and meat
Unto the hungry soul.
It is to fast from strife,
From old debate, and hate—
To circumcise thy life.
To show a heart grief-rent;
To starve thy sin—not bin—
And that's to keep thy Lent."
—*Herrick.*

Ver. 13. "ASSURED PEACE." Peace is not a compromise with circumstances. It is a Divine reality in the heart. Righteousness is rest—holiness is peace—rectitude with God, arising through trust in the atonement of God the Son, means tranquillity deep and unchanging as the peace of God which passeth understanding!—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

"Far, far away the roar of passion dieth,
And loving thoughts rise calm and peacefully;
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs that deeper rest, O Lord, in Thee."
—*H. B. Stowe.*

Ver. 19. WRESTLING PRAYERS. "If thy suit be not honest, never begin it: if it be, never leave it."—*Trapp.*

Ver. 20. SIN ACKNOWLEDGED. "Many people can mourn for a body from which a soul is departed, but they cannot mourn over a soul whom God has deserted. Alas! what is a spot in the face to a stab in the heart? Inward diseases are least visible and yet most fatal. A man may die of a plague though his spots never appear."—*Secker.*

CONTRITION NECESSARY. "Take the cold iron, and attempt to weld it, if you can, into a certain shape. How fruitless the effort! Lay it on the anvil, seize the blacksmith's hammer with all your might, let blow after blow fall on it, and you shall have done nothing; but put it in the fire, let it be softened and made malleable, then lay it on the anvil, and each stroke shall have a mighty effect, so that you may mould it into any shape you may desire. So take your heart, not cold as it is, but put it into the furnace; let it be molten, and after that it can be fashioned into the image of Jesus Christ."—*Spurgeon.*

CONVERSION. A Scotch lassie was converted under the preaching of Whitfield. She was asked if her heart were changed, and replied, "Something, I know, is changed; it may be the world, it may be my heart; there is a great change somewhere, I am sure; for everything is different from what it once was."

"I need a cleansing change within:
My life must once again begin;
New hope I need, and youth renewed,
And more than human fortitude;
New faith, new love, and strength to cast
Away the fetters of the past."
—*Hartley Coleridge.*

Ver. 21. "DO NOT DISGRACE THE THRONE OF THY GLORY." The Romans held the extinction of the vestal fire a sign of the destruction of their city, be the cause thereof what it will. We may well think the same of the loss of God's ordinances, which therefore we must deprecate, as here, with all our might; for as Bodin said well of obtaining, so likewise of retaining, religion, *Non disputationibus sed rogationibus*, &c.: the business will be the better effected by requests than by disputes. Pray, therefore, for the peace of Jerusalem, yea, take no nay. *Deus ipse qui nullis contra se viribus superare potest, precibus vincitur* (Jerome). The invincible God is overcome by the power of prayer. —*Trapp.*

Ver. 22. MAN'S LONE HOPE. "Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as 'I imagine so,' or 'It is likely;' but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity: our salvation is fastened with God's own hand and Christ's own strength to the strong stake of God's unchangeable nature."—*Rutherford.*

CHAPTER XV.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES—For *Chronology of the Chapter and Historical Facts*, see on chap. xiv. *in loc.*

1. Personal Allusions. Ver. 1. "*Moses and Samuel*," here mentioned as having been pre-eminent and prevailing intercessors on behalf of their people. Comp. Exod. xxxii. 11–14; Numb. xiv. 13–20. as to *Moses*; and 1 Sam. vii. 9; xii. 23, as to *Samuel*: confer also Psalm

xcix. as to both. Ver. 4. "*Manasseh, son of Hezekiah:*" Hezekiah was a most devout and religious king, whose piety throws into more heinous contrast the unrestrained guiltiness of his impious son, Manasseh—the thirteenth king of Judah; reigned longer than any other monarch of the Davidic line; born (probably) *cir.* B.C. 710; his mother, Hephzibah, daughter of a citizen or prince of Jerusalem (2 Kings xxi). He succeeded to the throne at the age of twelve; the event was the signal for complete moral and spiritual debasement of the whole nation; every form of foreign idolatry was introduced—loathsome, sensuous, barbaric—even to the Moloch fires (2 Kings xvi. 3; Isa. xxx. 33; Jer. vii. 31), while the worship of Jehovah was repudiated, the holiness of the very sanctuary defiled (2 Chron. xxxiii. 4), God's prophets ruthlessly persecuted and slain (2 Kings xxi. 16), and the Theocracy openly repudiated and contemned. In the twenty-second year of his reign (according to a Jewish tradition), Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, invaded Israel, and carried Manasseh into Babylonian captivity, from which he was released (probably, for Scripture is strangely silent respecting his career) at the death of this Assyrian monarch. He then returned to his land, and attempted a reformation of his apostate and degraded nation and the restoration of Jehovah's worship (2 Chron. xxxiii. 15, 16), but the impurity and impiety of the people were beyond recal. His name, notwithstanding this repentance, was long held in abhorrence among the Jews.

2. Natural History. Ver. 3. "*Dogs to tear, fowls of the heaven and beasts of the earth to devour,*" &c. "Troops of hungry and semi-wild dogs wander about the fields and streets of the cities, devouring dead bodies and other offal" (Dr. W. Smith). These dogs would tear, mutilate, and partly devour the dead bodies (*cf.* 2 Kings ix. 35, 37), and birds and beasts of prey, vultures, jackals, and others, would make an end of such portions as the dogs left (Keil). Ver. 9. "*Her sun is gone down while it is yet day:*" Dr. Payne Smith suggests that many consider the reference here "to the battle of Megiddo, depicting the consternation of Jerusalem at that event. If so, in the *sun going down while it was yet day*, there will be a reference to the *eclipse* on Sept. 30, B.C. 610." Thus Hitzig remarks that the prophet "refers to the battle of Megiddo, the more probably (2 Kings xxiii. 29) as the figure of the sun setting in bright daylight might then be founded on the eclipse which took place in that valley Sept. 30, B.C. 610."

3. Manners and Customs. Ver. 3. '*I will appoint over them four kinds:*" (*appoint*, same word as in xiii. 21 פָּקַד): just as God had set over Israel kings, priests, prophets, and judges for the nation's well-being, so now He placed the people under the jurisdiction of these four destructive agencies (*cf.* Ezek. xiv. 21). Ver. 7. "*I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land:*" allusion to the winnowing process by which the chaff is driven out of the windows of the threshing-floor; in such manner would this people (mere chaff) be driven out of the openings and exits, "the gates of the land." Ver. 10. "*Lent on usury:*" the Mosaic law interdicted interest on loans to the poor (Exod. xxii. 25), and later on discriminated between foreigners and Hebrews, permitting usury upon loans to foreigners, but repudiating it with their brethren (Deut. xxiii. 19, 20). From this verse it appears that discredit was attached to any who lent on usury even so late as in Jeremiah's days. Yet there were departures from this law, and they caused bitter "strife and contention" between money-lender and debtor. Ver. 17. "*Sat not in the assembly of the mockers:*" convivial gatherings; meetings where, amid hilarity and festivity, God was ignored and sacred things ridiculed. See notes on chap. vi. 11. "*I sat alone because of Thy hand:*" either because the prophetic power so possessed his soul as to draw him apart from ordinary society and compel him to an isolated life (so Keil, Clarius, Vatablus, &c.), or "because of the faithful communication of his inspired messages he had been expelled from society, and been made the object of their fierce indignation" (Henderson).

4. Literary Criticisms. Ver. 1. "*Cast them out of My sight:*" send them, or drive them, from My presence; lit., from before My face, מֵעַל־פָּנַי; the form implies (supposititiously) that the people were assembled before Jehovah within the Temple—they were to "go forth," leave the sacred precincts; God would not be interceded for them. Ver. 3. "*four kinds:*" מִשְׁפָּחוֹת, lit. families; agencies of destruction. Ver. 4. "*Cause them to be removed:*" זַוְעָה, from the root זוּעַ, tossing, violent motion, maltreatment, quaking, terror. These various shades of meaning supply different interpretations of the text: I will cause them to be tossed violently hither and thither, abused, *maltreated* (Keil): I will give them up to *agitation; shuddering* unto all kingdoms (Hitzig, Graf): cause them to be a *terror* (Payne Smith): a *horror* (Lange). Ver. 5. "*Pity . . . bemoan . . . go aside,*" &c.: חָמַל, to feel sympathy; נוּד, to lament and deplore; סוּר, to turn out of the way—"*to ask how thou doest:*" לִשְׁלוֹם, to *salam*, salute, inquire as to one's health. No one will cherish the people with sympathy, indeed no one will trouble themselves to inquire as to their good. Ver. 6. "*Thou hast forsaken Me, saith the Lord:*" אַתְּ נָטַשְׁתְּ אֹתִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה; the word "forsaken" is a feeble rendering of נָטַשׁ, "thou hast *cast Me out, abandoned Me.*" And this emphatic repudiation of Jehovah on their part justifies God's refusal to be interceded for them. Ver

7. "*Gates of the land:*" הָאָרֶץ. Ewald and Graf render it *earth*, and understand it that God would winnow them through the extremities of the earth, remotest regions; but Keil, Lange, Henderson, retain "land:" God would drive them through the gates of their own land into exile. Ver. 8. "*I have brought upon them against the mother,*" &c.: *Henderson:* "The words עַל־אֵם בָּחוּר have been very differently construed. The LXX. *ἐπὶ μητέρα νεανίσκου.* Some (Syriac, Arabic, C. B. Michaelis, and Ewald) compare the phrase אֵם עַל בָּנִים, *the mother with her children*, but the position of the preposition before and not after אֵם renders such construction untenable. Others (Chaldean, Kimchi, J. D. Michaelis, Hitzig, Graf, and Naegelsbach) take אֵם בָּחוּר to be in the construct state: *the mother of the young man*, or, regarding the nouns as collectives, *the mothers of the young men.* Jarchi, Capellus, Castalio, Dr. Dieu, Döderlein, Eichorn, and Dahler (and Reshi) consider אֵם, *mother*, to mean, the metropolis (as 2 Sam. xx. 19)." Favouring this latter rendering, Henderson reads the words thus: I have brought to them—against the mother (city)—a young spoiler (Nebuchadnezzar). But with Jerome and Kimchi, &c., both Keil and the *Speaker's Comm.* coincide, and translates: I have brought upon them, *even upon the mother and the young man*, a spoiler, &c.—*i.e.*, no age or sex will escape the spoiler. "*I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly;*" rather, caused pangs and terrors to fall upon *her* suddenly. Ver. 10. "*Every one doth curse me:*" The Hebrew words כֻּלֹּה מְקַלְלוּנִי have been wrongly divided, and should be כֻּלָּהֶם קִלְלוּנִי The form כֻּלָּהֶם (1st pers.) is unusual, yet is found in 2 Sam. xxiii. 6. Ver. 11. "*Verily it shall be well with thy remnant:*" a various reading appears here: a different pointing wholly changing the sense: שְׁרוֹתֶךָ may be pointed thus, שָׁרוֹתֶךָ, (the infinitive *Kal* from שָׁרַר to oppress), or שְׁרוֹתֶךָ (from שָׁרָה, *to loose*). The latter is preferable, and agrees with the rendering given to the only other appearance of the verb in the Heb. Scriptures (Job xxxvii. 3; *setteth the lightning loose*). The reading of the words then is, *Verily thy loosing shall be for good;* or, Verily I have loosed thee for good. "*Thy remnant:*" these words of course disappear from the text, being included and lost in the above translation of the sentence. "*Cause the enemy to entreat thee well:*" הַפְגַּעְתִּי (from פָּגַע, *to meet, make peace, cause to supplicate*): hence, I will cause the enemy to supplicate thee in the time of evil.

Ver. 12. "*Shall iron break:*" can iron (ordinary iron) break northern iron and *brass?* not "*steel;*" or, can one break iron, *i.e.*, northern iron and brass? Ver. 14. "*I will make* thee *to pass with thine enemies:*" for the form וְהַעֲבַרְתִּי, Henderson and Dr. Payne Smith give והעבדתי, I will cause thee to serve thine enemies: they make this change of the letter (ד instead of ר) on the ground of numerous MSS., also from the authority of the parallel passage, chap. xvii. 4. Ver. 15. "*Suffered rebuke:*" reproach. Ver. 18. "*Pain incurable:*" very sick. אֲנוּשָׁה, malignant (comp. chap. xxx. 12; Mic. i. 9; Isa. xvii. 11). "*Wilt Thou be?*" = Art Thou become. "*A liar:*" אַכְזָב, as a *deceitful* (brook or stream). "*And as waters that fail:*" as precarious water; the opposite of the perennial stream of Amos v. 24. Ver. 19. "*Bring thee again,*" &c., rather, I will cause thee again to stand before my face (see *Lit. Crit.* on ver. 1, *supra*). This was an assurance to Jeremiah, that if he *returned* to his unquestioning trust in God's wisdom and ways, God would confirm him in his prophetic and vicegeral relation to Himself. It was a gentle reproof of his impatient questionings, and a pledge of the renewal of his sacred trust. "*Thou shalt stand before me,*" Luther renders, Thou shalt remain my preacher.

HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XV.

Section 1–9. God's decisive refusal of the prophet's petitions.
" 10–14. The consequent outcry of woe answered with Divine expostulations.
" 15–21. Fretting lamentations silenced with promises.

Vers. 1–9. God's Decisive Refusal of the Prophet's Petition.

I. There may be a criminality for which no intercession can be adequate.

1. *Intercessors had prevailed even in cases of appalling guilt.* When Moses and Samuel interceded effectually, the condition of Israel was most iniquitous and provocative of Divine wrath; yet they prevailed in prayer. Such "effectual fervent prayers of righteous men avail much." It would almost seem that nothing could transcend the reach of mediatorial pleadings.

2. *Yet there is a bound to the prevalency of intercession.* Even Moses and Samuel would now find their mediation fail. For (1) *God could not be reconciled to such a people.* His "mind" was irremediably averted from them. (2) *He had irrevocably determined their banishment;* could not endure or permit their remaining within His sight. Persistent and defiant criminality can effectually alienate God. "*There is a sin which is unto death;* I do not say that he shall pray for it."

3. *Nevertheless, in these times of grace, through Christ, it appears impossible to exceed Divine clemency.* What Moses and Samuel and Jeremiah could not do, *Jesus can!* "What the law (of Moses) could not do," &c. (Rom. viii. 3). "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that *come unto God by Him*," &c. (Heb. vii. 25).

II. **Destructive agencies are in readiness for sinners abandoned to judgment.**

1. *A discriminating consignment to various forms of doom.* All will not experience *similar* and *equal* judgment. A different form of *punishment* is allotted to each. Yet this "going forth" is not merely to *banishment*, but to *execution*. "These shall *go away* to everlasting *destruction*."

2. *Ruthless agencies of execution await their opportunity to destroy.* So long as God shielded this people and retained them "before His face," they were secure. So long as we are shielded by His mercy, ruin cannot reach us, however we may merit the ruin. But instantly God sent them "out of His sight," away from His befriending, lo! "death, the sword, famine, and captivity," all rushed upon them. Cast away from God's presence, we shall find executioners vigilant.

3. *Abandoned spiritual apostasy is the unpardonable offence with God.* (See *Personal Allusions* on ver. 4, "*Manasseh.*") The horrifying indulgences, sacrilegeous debasements, foul practices, defiance and defilement of God's holiness and holy place: these were the people's crimes under Manasseh. He did but let loose their cherished apostasy. Himself vile, the nation rushed into and revelled in vileness and villany. This is "the sin unto death."

III. **Flagrant wickedness ultimately alienates all commiseration or compassion.**

1. *Human pity is estranged* (ver. 5). No one will sympathise with their misery, lament their ruin, or inquire for their condition.

2. *Divine relenting is exhausted* (ver. 6). God was "weary with repenting," and would now inexorably punish.

3. *Justice effectually avenges impenitence.* "They return not from their ways" (ver. 7). That justifies their final and severe doom. (1) *From their land driven forth* (ver. 7). (2) *Their holy city desolated* (ver. 8). (3) Death and doom overtaking all, irrespective of sex or age (ver. 9, see *Lit. Crit.* on verse).

NOTE: "*Pity*" is slow to die, even from the *human* heart; it survives, and asserts itself even when all affection is dead. Far more slowly does *God's pity* die. Yet heinous, determined, ostentatious, and persistent guilt will eventually destroy all pity for the wicked. Then only terrible and implacable miseries can ensue.

Ver. 10–14. THE OUTCRY OF WOE ANSWERED WITH EXPOSTULATIONS.

Seeing that he availed nothing by prayer, the prophet raised his lament. Into his cry enter both *personal disappointment* and *patriotic dismay.*

I. **He bemoans his troubled prophetic career, since it accomplished no national good.**

He repines over: 1. *His personal hardships.* 2. *His prophetic calling and commission*, for these had been fruitful of grief, suffering, and calumny. And 3. *The hostility he encounters:* "Every one doth curse me;" his experiences are as distressing as if *he had himself* been "a man of strife and contention," and as if *his occupation* had been that of the hated usurer! Observe how he gives promi-

nence to the *comfortless* aspects of his career,—how he thrusts his own troubles forward, almost ignoring the wisdom and beniguity of the Divine purpose in commissioning him to prophetic duties. What were his sufferings and discomforts as compared with the opportunities and persuasives to salvation God had sent to the nation through him? He betrays:

i. *Grief for apparent failure in his work and prayers.* "He felt angry that he effected less than he wished" (*Calvin*). All ministers could alike complain.

ii. *Regret for the hardships his ministry had entailed.* Sinners are apt to judge and slander faithful preachers as contentious disturbers of their peace.

iii. *Trouble for the irrevocable ruin of his nation.* The hearts of his people were unmoved, unchanged. And, his preachings and prayers notwithstanding, Judah was doomed!

II. **With mingled promises and threatenings God answers the prophet's complaint.** Jehovah meets the outcry thus:—

1. *He assures him of ameliorating mercies amid the coming distress* (ver. 11). He should be exempt from the national woe, and be treated with forbearance.

2. *Explains the prophet's impotency in intercession.* His prayers are but as "iron," stout and determined indeed; yet God's purpose to send Judah into exile is inflexible as "northern iron and steel," or, the Assyrian invasion cannot be repelled now by your prayers (ver. 12).

3. *Justifies the severe judgments He had determined upon Judah.* Her prevalent "sins" (ver. 13) necessitated punishment.

4. *Avows Himself moved to a fiery anger which should consume the hardened nation.* God was wroth, justly and resolutely angry; and such righteous anger could not be restrained, as if it were fitful, by even His prophet's cries. Personal feeling must bow to Divine equity.

Ver. 15–21. Fretting Lamentations silenced with Promises.

In the strophe (ver. 15–18), the prophet, though recognising that the fall of Judah is inevitable, as shown in ver. 12–14, and that he cannot escape the hard lot of having to predict the ruin of his country as a purpose absolutely determined, yet offers unto God a last expostulation, and that in a tone of reproach, as if the promises made in chap. i. 18 had not been fulfilled.

His words are full of meaning:

I. **He appeals to God the all-knowing** (who was acquainted, therefore, with the manner of his call, the promises made him, the hopes with which he had accepted his office, his disappointment, his dangers, the opposition he had met with, and his perseverance when in despair) *to show that He remembered him* by visiting him, *i.e.*, by interfering in some marked manner in his behalf and punishing his persecutors.

To the prophet God's long-suffering towards the wicked seemed to be the abandonment of himself to death, and justice itself required that one who was suffering contumely for God's sake should be delivered.

II. **He contrasts the joy with which he had accepted his office** (ver. 16), when he received God's words and "did eat them," with—

III. **The present revulsion of his feelings** (ver. 17): the intense "indignation" with which he regarded the sins of the people, which were *heinous in themselves, grievous offences against God*, and *involved the ruin of His Church.* Then

IV. **Prays for more evident help** (ver. 19). It is the prayer of a man in bitter grief, whose human nature cannot at present submit to the Divine will.

V. **Laments that the delivery of God's message availed nothing.** His labours were in vain. This made his "pain perpetual," &c. Nothing he did had in aught changed the miserable state of things around him. Jeremiah had expected that, called to so high an office, there would be perpetual interference of Providence in

his behalf, instead whereof, things seemed to take only their natural course. God seemed "as a deceitful stream" to him.

To all this God made a reply full of forbearance and graciousness, although comfort is blended with rebuke.

I. Solemn conditions are specified. These were imperative to the prophet's reinstatement in official dignity and service (ver. 19).

1. *Personal "return."* Jeremiah had, as in chap. xii., questioned God's righteousness; he is told he must "return," must repent him of his doubts, and think only of his duty.

2. *Separation in himself of what was divine and holy from the dross of human passion* (*Maurer*): let the "precious" metal be distinct from the "vile."

II. Gracious assurances are given.

1. *The restoration of Jeremiah to the prophetic office:* "I will cause thee again to stand before me" (see *Lit. Crit.* on verse). To stand before a person means to be his chief officer or viceregent, and is said of Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 1), and Elisha (2 Kings iii. 14), as God's prophets; of David as Saul's minister (1 Sam. xvi. 21, 22), of Nebuzar-adan as commander-in-chief of Nebuchadnezzar's arms (Jer. lii. 12, margin).

2. *He should be again the organ by which God would speak:* "Thou shalt be as My mouth." Here is supplied a principle for regulating the prophet's conduct:—"Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them:" concede not to the people—a flattering prophet perishes with the people whom his soft speeches have confirmed in their sin; but the truthful speaking of God's Word saves both.

3. *The original promises and covenant with Jeremiah are confirmed* (ver. 20, 21). This repeats God's pledge given at Jeremiah's original call (see chap. i. 18, 19), adding the promise of deliverance from men of open violence—"the terrible."—*Arranged from Speaker's Com.*

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* THE LOATHSOME SOUL OUTCAST FROM GOD. "My mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of My sight."

Such is Jehovah's answer to the kneeling, weeping, pleading prophet. Jeremiah, in his prayer, had asked, as if it could never really be so, "Hath Thy soul *loathed* Zion?" (xiv. 19). Now God affirms that the people had become irrevocably loathsome to Him.

I. Loathing would seem impossible to a God of beneficent love.

1. *Sin, though repulsive, did not alienate God's love from the world.* For "God commended His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly."

2. *However defiled and worthless the sinner, there dwells abounding grace in Christ.* None can exceed the virtue of His atonement or the compass of His pity, or the fulness of His Gospel calls.

3. *It is the crowning glory of God that He is merciful to our unrighteousness.* He proclaims Himself to be, and would be known as, "The Lord merciful and gracious," &c.

4. *Love delights to assert itself towards those in the lowest depths of alienation.* It seeks and saves the *lost*.

5. *Extreme cases in the Gospel records encourage hope for vilest sinners.* The crucified malefactor, who cast revilings in Christ's teeth; Mary Magdalene, out of whom was cast seven devils; Saul, who breathed out threatenings and slaughter, &c.

II. Loathing can only ensue where love has been relentlessly outraged. This was Judah's case; her conduct had exhausted and exceeded all the resources of Divine love.

1. *Love may not neutralise the law and action of rightness.* It may interpose and mitigate justice, but not frustrate it. And where love effects no change in the sinner, right must be allowed to pursue its course and requite the guilty conduct.

2. *Wilful contempt of patient and pitying love courts Divine aversion.* Such treatment of God's gentleness and patience arouses indignation. "Last of all, He sent His Son, and *Him* they *slew!*"

3. *The superlative crime of the sinner is to outrage and alienate love.* To break *law* is evil enough, but when love interposes to shield the wrong-doer, for him then to abuse *love* is to culminate iniquity.

III. Loathing, when once incurred, closes all hope of reconciliation. "My mind cannot be towards this people."

1. *The very thoughts of God*, as well as His affections, *turn irrevocably away* from such heinous transgressors.

2. *No intercession can effect a recal of the Divine complacency.* He cannot look upon such sin.

3. *While the horrible heartlessness of men remains* there can be no basis of reconciliation. "Intercession is powerful, and is not without fruit, when he who prays and they for whom he prays *are of like spirit*" (*Cramer*). But, with relentless hostility in the human heart, God can never turn compassionately towards the sinner.

IV. Loathing having been righteously merited, the doom of banishment follows. "Cast them out of My sight."

1. *No place in the Divine mind entails no place in the Divine presence.* Having forfeited God's favour, the soul must quit His abode.

2. *No place in the Divine presence entails irrevocable banishment.* An outcast,—"a castaway." "These shall go away." "Oh, that they were wise, that they understood these things, that they would consider their *latter end.*"

Theme: INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

Prayer is both a duty and a privilege. Scripture commands that those who pray should not limit prayer to self: "Pray one for another." Intercessions are to be made for all men (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2). Jeremiah had prayed very earnestly for his people. He was not only unsuccessful, but was even forbidden to pray for them (xiv. ver. 11). Moreover, he is informed that though Moses and Samuel should *both* stand before God, even *they* could not prevail. This suggests to us that there are limits to the duty and to the power of intercessory prayer. Consider, then,

I. That intercessory prayer is an exercise of great value.

1. *As developing our love to man.* Interesting ourselves in his trials, seeking to save him from his sins. This love may be shown first to our nearest friends, but it will, if true, take in man as man. We are to pray even for "them that despitefully use us."

2. *As carrying out the Divine precepts.* In the spirit of Christ, in the fellowship of life. "When ye pray say, *Our* Father." The model prayer is in the plural, "our," "us," "we;" *not* I, my, me.

3. *As following after noble examples.* Abraham, Moses, Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 9), Elijah, Jeremiah, Jesus, and all good men who love the souls of their fellows.

4. *As obtaining great blessings for others.* Lot appears to have been saved by Abraham's prayer. Israel often spared because Moses or Samuel prayed (Exod. xxxii. 11–14; Numb. xiv. 17–20; 1 Sam. vii. 9). The prayer of faith was to save the sick, to obtain even salvation (James v. 15; 1 John v. 16), &c.

II. That intercessory prayer can be offered only by good men. "The effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man availeth much."

1. *He must not be under the sin against which he prays.* If it be a prayer of sympathy for one in trouble, this rule has no force. It is essential that, as the priest of old time went in first for himself then for the people, so it should be also with intercessory prayer.

2. *Should know by experience the value of the blessing he craves for another.* Else how can he pray with the heart and understanding.

3. *He must be willing to join effort with prayer.* Otherwise his sympathy and desire will be a mere pretence, a thing of words, a mere worthless sentiment. God will not hear the prayers of those who will do nothing but pray, if

they are able to do other things besides to gain the object of their prayers.

III. That intercessory prayer has some limitations even when offered by the best of men. Such as Jeremiah, Moses, Samuel.

1. *This is evident from Scripture.* Abraham could not prevail to save Sodom. Peter would not pray for Simon Magus; he must pray for himself. John in his First Epistle says, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it." (See other texts.)

2. *This is evident from observation.* We have all known many prayers offered for others which have been apparently unanswered. Sometimes the faults are in ourselves (see under II.), but sometimes we fail to find explanation.

3. *Reason would lead to the same conclusion.* The best of men are but men. They may at times be more influenced by sorrowful sights than by sinful acts. Personal feeling controls them as it does others. Prayer is powerful, but not all-powerful. God will grant their requests if in so doing He can be just and true to all—His character and all His people.

IV. That intercessory prayer is a grand distinction and provision of the Gospel. We have

1. *The best of intercessors* (Heb. vii. 25). In office, in sympathy, in work, in influence.

2. *Praying for the best of blessings.* Salvation, preservation, comfort, glory (John xvii. 24).

3. *Taking up the case of every soul that trusts Him.* "All that come unto God by Him" (Heb. vii. 25).

4. *Always successful in His intercession.* He will not take up any case which would or could fail. He always does those things which please the Father. He is always heard (John xi. 42). His plea is irresistible,—*it satisfies law, it magnifies grace, it humbles the sinner, it glorifies the Father, it consecrates life to good deeds.*

Let the failure of others teach us to fly for refuge to the *only One* whose intercessions are unfailing. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous" (His prayer for Peter Luke xxii. 31, 32).—*W. Whale.*

Ver. 2. *Theme:* INCREDULITY AT GOD' MESSAGE OF DOOM. "If they shall say unto thee"—as they are likely to do in a jeer and with scoffing incredulity —"Whither shall we go forth?"

I. The seeming incredibility of the doom pronounced.

1. *Sinners cannot think their ruin really imminent.* They dream on demented, revel in sin, blinded to its enormity and their own peril.

2. *Messages of doom seem to them empty menaces.* It was so when Noah prophesied the Flood; so when the angel threatened Sodom's overthrow; so with the terrible predictions of our Lord concerning Jerusalem's destruction; and is so still when the "end of all things" and the fiery judgment are announced.

3. *Dreadful calamities start in the mind a revulsion which produces incredulity.* A kind of blank bewilderment results from the attempt to entertain a terrifying announcement—"Whither shall we go forth?" It is simply incredible, impossible. So now, in our own times, sinners answer the announcement of the woes awaiting the impenitent with a light indifference, a jeering unbelief. It is not credible that God will doom us, will dismiss us for ever from salvation!

II. The ready incredulity of those under doom.

Condemned souls would prefer not to realise the sentence true; so find evasive questions, endeavour to explain away the menace as meaningless, and then jeer contemptuously at the messenger who prophesies evil against them. The same process is rife to-day; for cavillers answer the preacher thus—There is no doom to the unsaved: whither will the ungodly be banished? Doom will not be very distressing: it is impossible that a soul should be for ever lost.

1. *Man meets God's threatenings with incredulity.*

2. *God meets man's incredulity with specific affirmations.* "Such as are for death," &c. There is a dreadful precision in God's dire messages: they

cannot well be explained away as parabolic images, as oriental and pictorial figures, merely setting off in bold colours a trifling occurrence. Such things as are here arrayed in order to bring incredulity to its sober senses—*death, the sword, famine, captivity*—are more than imaginary forms of speech; they are terrific facts, appallingly literal.

Note: Sinners would be wise to believe *God means exactly what He threatens.* What madness to risk the future on an evasive interpretation of His menaces!

See *Addenda:* SCORNFUL INCREDULITY.

Theme: SCOFFING ANSWERED BY SARCASM. The words may be so interpreted—

I. Derisive questionings; "Whither shall we go forth?" Perhaps you will tell us a little more explicitly what our doom is to be! Inform us, if you can, where and to what we are to be driven.

II. Sarcastic directions. Would you know more precisely to what God will send you forth? Then hear: Each to his allotted doom: one shall "go forth" to "death," and he shall certainly meet it; another to "the sword," &c. *The way will be made quite plain to you,* so plain that *you will not be likely to miss your appointed doom.* These evils you jeer at will be found waiting for you in their appointed place. Do not think there will be any probability of your missing them. All is carefully and conveniently arranged for you. (Comp. vers. 3, 4.)

Ver. 4. *Comments*—

I WILL CAUSE THEM TO BE REMOVED. *Blayney* rightly observes that the word rendered "to be removed," in our version, has no such meaning. The *verb* means to move, agitate, disquiet, but not to move from one place to another. The *noun* as found here is rendered "vexation" in Isa. xxviii. 19, and "trouble" in 2 Chron. xxix. 8. The idea of removing is not given in any of the versions, nor in the *Targum.* It is used in two places by Jeremiah, chap. xxiv. 9; xxix. 18. In both places "vexation, trouble, or disquietude" would be the best rendering. The sentence may be thus translated: *And I will render them a vexation to all the kingdoms of the earth.* Literally it is, "I will give them for a vexation," &c. And so they became; they were a trouble and a disquietude wherever they were; and hence they became, as it is said in chap. xxix. 18, a curse, a hissing, and a reproach among all nations.

Venema gives this rendering: And I will give them for a shaking to all the kingdoms of the earth. Which he understands to mean, that *they would be given to be shaken,* agitated and disquieted.—*Ed. of Calvin.*

The Jews were to have no rest, but were to be driven from place to place at the pleasure of their enemies. Ewald: *Spiel des Windes.*—*Hend.*

Rather: I will cause them to be *a terror.* So the Syriac and Rashi render, Every one who hears of the calamity that has befallen them will tremble. The words are quoted from Deut. xxviii. 25.—*Speaker's Com.*

"BECAUSE OF MANASSEH THE SON OF HEZEKIAH." The sin upon which this severe sentence is grounded—

i. *It is in remembrance of a former iniquity.* It is "because of Manasseh." What "he did in Jerusalem" we are told (1 Kings xxiv. 3, 4). This is brought into the account with the present generation, to show that *the guilt of blood* will light and lie somewhere sooner or later, and that *reprieves are not pardons.*

ii. *It is in consideration of their present impenitency.* Their own sin is described in vers. 6 and 7. There is mercy for those who have turned aside, if they will return; but what favour can they expect who persist in their apostasy? —*Henry.*

"THE SON OF HEZEKIAH." But altogether degenerate. He was therefore the worse, *because he should have been better;* and the worse again, because he was *author publicæ corruptelæ,* a ringleader of rebellion to others, as was Jeroboam.—*Trapp.*

God keeps an exact protocol (register) of sins, and visits them to the third and fourth generation.—*Cramer.*

See what uncertain comforts children are, and let us therefore rejoice in them as though we rejoiced not.—*Henry.*

Qualis rex talis grex.—Förster.

Theme: AN ANOMALY IN THE LAW OF TRANSMISSION. "Because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah."

Notice that, 1. *Grace was* NOT *transmitted* from Hezekiah to Manasseh: parental virtues do not necessarily reappear in the children. 2. *Guilt* WAS *transmitted* from Manasseh to that generation: evil travels down, reappears through successive years.

Explanation: The human heart is *not naturally enamoured of godliness*, does not instinctively appreciate and reciprocate good example; but "men *love* darkness," are quick to respond to the sway and charm of a bad example.

I. **Eminent piety in the father does not ensure godliness in the son.** Social life cannot guarantee what a child's future will be. Only God's grace can implant holiness.

1. *Godliness is not hereditary.* Parents cannot produce it in their children. Neither is it transmitted involuntarily.

2. *To see godliness at home does not necessarily awaken others to love and emulate it.* The example of holiness is not omnipotent, neither is it sure to charm others. The heart is not prone to it.

II. **Criminality is deepened when a holy parental example is repudiated.**

1. *It was Manasseh's duty*, personally and publicly, to follow *Hezekiah's example.* For the reforms Hezekiah had effected were manifestly *right in themselves, and beneficial to the nation*, as well as *due to God*, who had befriended Judah.

2. *It was an aggravation of his guilt that he reversed all his father had done.* He owed it to *his father* to respect the work he had so laboriously wrought; and to *his father's God* to preserve the worship and sacred institutions he had so zealously restored.

[Notes:—

"The name of the pious father intensifies the horror at the wickedness of the son" (2 Kings xxi. 3).—*Speaker's Com.*

"We learn that they are *worthy of a heavier punishment*, who have been religiously brought up from their childhood, and have afterwards degenerated; who, having had pious and godly parents, afterwards abandon themselves to every wickedness. Hence a heavier judgment awaits those who depart from the examples of godly fathers."—*Calvin.*

"His relation to so good a father was a great aggravation to his sin, so far was it from being an excuse for it."—*Henry.*]

III. **Rueful consequences will overtake a people who elect and follow a guilty leader.** Why does God threaten vengeance on this generation for Manasseh's sins?

1. *His example did not justify them in doing the same.* They could not shelter themselves under the plea of Manasseh's leading.

2. *Their continuance in guilt was wilful and determined.* They reproduced Manasseh's crimes, but it was not because some force urged them on *involuntarily;* they did evil of their own accord.

3. *The people had a choice of examples before them.* Hezekiah had shown them the way of godliness; Manasseh, the way of sin. But they "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." There was in them "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

4. *To follow evil leading will lead to evil issues.* "I will cause them to be removed—to be a horror—among the nations, because of Manasseh." "Both fall into the ditch."

See *Addenda:* PARENTAGE.

Ver. 5. *Comments—*

Who will take pity . . . to wish thee well? "From vers. 1–4, it follows with absolute certainty that Jehovah will no longer help, and that therefore Israel is inevitably lost. No longer any escape! If the Lord will not, who else will have pity on the people? (Isa. li. 19; Nah. iii. 7.) Who, indeed, will even ask how they are? The thought seems to be

implied, that still less will any one do aught for the welfare of the people, or any longer intercede for them as the prophet has done (xvi. 7 *seq.*)"—*Naeg.*

"When God abandons us, we are abandoned also by the holy angels and all creatures. For as at court, when two eyes are turned away the whole court turns away; so when the Lord turns away, all His hosts turn away also."—*Cramer.*

"The sinful people will be given up to all the kingdoms of the earth to be ill used, for no one will or can have compassion on Jerusalem, since its rejection by God is a just punishment for its rejection of the Lord (ver. 6). *Have pity* and *bemoan* denote loving sympathy with the fall of the unfortunate.—*Keil.*

Theme: LOST EVEN TO PITY. "Who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem?"

It is usual to pity the ignorant, the unfortunate, the weak; but the wilfully evil, those who sin against the light of knowledge and the manifestations of love, must be blamed and, unless they repent, condemned. In her sorrows Jerusalem seemed an object of pity, but there were none to show favour unto her. The gods which she had worshipped could render no help, and the people at whose evil desire she had compromised her honour now taunted and derided her (Lam. ii. 15). Who shall pity *thee?*

I. Thou hast had the oracles of God. Thy case is not as the heathen who have no knowledge, but as of those who "love darkness rather than light."

II. Thou hast had great religious advantages. The priesthood, sacrifices, and mercy-seats. The Sabbaths, sacred feasts, and gracious promises.

III. Thou hast had a history of Divine mercies. In Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. By Moses and Aaron, Joshua and the Judges, Samuel, David, and Solomon. At the Red Sea, at Marah, at Elim, at Rephidim, at Horeb, at Jordan, &c.

IV. Thou hast insulted and forsaken thy best Friend. Thy choice has been fatal to thee, for thou hast gone away after the weak, worthless, and wicked.

V. He who pities thee most is compelled to punish thee. For His holiness' sake, and as a warning to others (Matt. xxiii. 37, 39).

VI. All other pity is useless to thee. It cannot deliver thee. It cannot take away thy sin. Oh that thou wouldest truly repent and turn unto the Lord, then would He not only pity, but pardon and prosper thee.—*W. Whale.*

See *Addenda:* LOST TO PITY.

Ver. 6. *Theme:* JEHOVAH WEARY WITH REPENTING.

These words do not accord with our ideas of the Divine Being. We are accustomed to the words, "He fainteth not, neither is weary," and "He is not man that He should repent." The word "repent" evidently is not to be taken in its ordinary sense as applied to men. So far from the word "repent" indicating change in God, it is the outworking of His immutability. He ever regards sin with abhorrence, and contrite hearts with pity and grace; if, therefore, the people are hardened in sin, He sends a message like that by Jonah to Nineveh, but if, during the day of grace, the people truly repent and cry for mercy, then, by the same law of His being, He refrains from carrying out His threatenings. There is a *real* change in the people, which alters the relationship in which they stand towards God, but there is only an *apparent* change in the Divine dealing. To the impenitent, God is unchangeably just. To the penitent, He is unchangeably merciful. The fact that God is "weary of repenting," shows—

I. That God had often turned from His threatenings, and dealt in mercy with the people.

II. That the Divine mercy had been frequently abused, and the people had gone back again to their sins.

III. That not a change in His being, but only a change of relationship, is expressed by the word "repent" (Jonah iii. 10).

IV. That judgment is alien to God's heart, whereas mercy is His delight. If He can, without weakening the force of justice and encouraging sin, He will magnify grace and save men

V. That when God is met with persistent ingratitude, and men relapse continually to sin, He must eventually punish them. He is weary with repenting, and will deal in judgment with them.

VI. That the operations of the Divine mind can only be expressed in human language with difficulty and limitation.

VII. That we should be careful in not trifling with or abusing the patient longsuffering of God. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."—*W. Whale.*

WEARY WITH REPENTING. "The punishment due has been delayed into weariness, and this seeming failure of justice has made Judah withdraw farther from God."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"This determination of the Lord will not change, for He is weary of repenting."—*Keil.*

"God is represented as a man whose patience is at last quite tired out, it being to no purpose to withdraw His hand any longer from striking."—*Lowth.*

Comments—

Ver. 7. "*The gates of the land* mean the places by which men enter or leave it. As God winnows them, they are driven out of the land through all its outlets in every direction."—*Payne Smith.*

"The gates of the land mean the *extreme points* at which an entrance or an exit was effected. Jehovah threatens to carry them thither, to be thence scattered among the nations." (Comp. Nah. iii. 13.)—*Henderson.*

Ver. 8. "*Against the mother of the young men,*" &c. (See *Lit. Crit.* on ver. p. 315.) Most of the old commentators regarded this as a reference to the mother-city, Jerusalem. Archbishop Secker suggested that "the nation in general is called the 'mother' of each Jew in particular," citing Isa. l. 1 and Hos. ii. 2–5. But exact criticism brings out the sense—*against the mother of the young man*, the word rendered "young man" meaning a picked warrior; and suggesting that even the vigorous woman who had borne a valorous warrior would fall before the spoiler. Neither strength nor valour could deliver from him. Others suggest, that both mother and son would fall, neither age nor sex being respected.

Ver. 8. *Theme:* SUDDEN SPOLIATIONS.

A spoiler at noonday: Henderson's reading (see *Lit. Crit.*), "a young spoiler," leads him to adopt into his comments a historic statement which Josephus cites from Berosus, the Chaldean historian, which reads thus: "That Nabopollassar, king of Babylon, hearing that the provinces of Egypt, Cœle-Syria, and Phenice had revolted, and being himself infirm from age, sent a part of his forces under his son Nebuchadnezzar (*i.e.*, Nebuchadnezzar II.), then *in the prime of youth*, by whom these provinces were again reduced." After defeating Pharaoh-Necho at Charchemish, he marched forward against Jerusalem and captured it. The *noonday* attack, at an hour when military operations were usually suspended, indicated the *restlessness* of the spoiler—he could not wait; and the *unexpectedness* of the attack—at an hour when none anticipated. So that these facts stand out:

I. The Divinity which rules in calamities. "*I* have brought upon them:" "*I* have caused," &c. (1.) God works always. (2.) Disasters have a meaning and a mission. (3.) The law is being Divinely enforced that sin brings misery.

II. The resources of Jehovah for chastisement. God would have "the young spoiler" ready when the hour of judgment arrived. (1) He foreknows history, (2) anticipates the careers of nations, (3) provides for contingencies, and (4) prepares His emissaries for the work to be done.

III. The startling aspects of misfortune.

1. At *an unlikely hour:* "noonday."

2. By *an impatient agent:* eager, restless, could not wait for the sultry noon to pass.

3. With *an impetuous force:* "suddenly," like a lightning stroke; and "fall upon," as a crushing avalanche, irresistible, overbearing all. Even the

young warriors fell before the spoiler, and the mother too.

(*a.*) Thus *affliction* comes, and health, loved lives, are stricken.

(*b.*) Thus *reverses* befall, and home, fortune, are shattered.

(*c.*) Thus *conscience* terrifies, and the soul is filled with anguish for its guilt.

(*d.*) Thus *death* seizes its victims, and we lie cold; or "widows" multiply, or "young men" fall, or "mothers" weep for the slain.

(*e.*) Thus the *last day* will come, and the archangels' cry will suddenly appal the world.

Theme: LIFE'S NOONTIDE. "The spoiler at noonday."

Sermon to the *Young*.

I. In the noontide of life we suspect no nearing ills. The foe would not be anticipated at "noonday." The young expect no perils.

II. In the noontide of life spoilers conspire for our fall. The schemes of the enemy are founded on our not expecting him. He takes advantage.

III. In the noontide of life the young have been destroyed. Think of *Byron*. Yes, even the "young warrior." "The young men do utterly fall."

IV. In the noontide of life death seizes its prey. No age is spared. The "spoiler" respects none. Youth may lie.

V. In the noontide of life, God's redeeming care is urgently needed. Only as He befriends us are we safe when the "spoiler" comes. Religion is not merely for old age. *Youth needs God.* Hid with Christ in Him, nought can harm. "I fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

See *Addenda*: LIFE'S NOONTIDE.

Vers. 6–9. *Theme:* GOD FORSAKING AND GOD FORSAKEN.

When the Spirit of the Lord came upon Azariah, the son of Oded (2 Chron. xv. 1, 2), he was moved to say unto Judah and Benjamin, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him He will be found of you, *but if ye forsake Him He will forsake you.*" These verses remarkably verify that inspired utterance. Here we meet—

I. A God forsaking people. They are convicted by God Himself of a great folly and sin: "Thou hast forsaken Me." In chap. ii. 13 the charge is more complete. Creation is called upon to express surprise at a folly so conspicuous as that of forsaking the fount of all good, and taking up with helpless vanities.

"*Thou*,"—who oughtest to have been unto Me a loyal and loving people, testifying of My power and grace, and proving by separation from the nations your preference for the living and true God.

"*Hast forsaken*," — not simply forgotten, or disobeyed, but of deliberate choice hast taken other gods, and disregarded Jehovah.

"*Me*," — who called Abraham and made a covenant of lasting privileges with him and his descendants, who brought you out of Egypt, who led you, fed you, protected you, and gave to you the land in which you dwell; and assured you, by wondrous promises which yet await fulfilment, of future good and greatness to you, if you could but be faithful to Jehovah.

II. A God-forsaken people. This is the effect, man's conduct the cause. "If ye forsake Him, He will forsake you." When a people are forsaken of God, they are—

1. *Always retrograde.* "Thou art gone backward," spiritually gone back into Egypt. All who forsake God go backward, always backward, and downward. Unless they repent and obey God, there is no way forward and upward. Forward and upward is the desire and movement of a true soul.

2. *Always in danger of destruction.* "Therefore will I destroy you." *Therefore* (*i.e.*), because you have gone backward. It is the penalty of a backward movement. It must come upon all who forsake God. If we forsake the mercy, we inherit the misery.

3. *Always exposed to terrors and disasters.* Suggested by such words as, "bereave,"—"widows,"—"spoiler,"

—"terrors." All caused by the God they have forsaken.

4. *Always drifting into languor, premature decline, shame, and death* (ver. 9). Such is the end of those who are forsaken of God. *No strength, no courage, no progress, no real true life;* but decline, captivity, and darkness. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—*W. Whale.*

Comments—

Ver. 9. "*She that hath borne seven languisheth.*" Seven, being the perfect number, signifies fulness: Jerusalem, the mother-city, was once fully populated, now she is deserted! "Formerly she prided herself in her offspring" (comp. 1 Sam. ii. 5), but now she is "ashamed and confounded" (Lam. i. 1).

"*She hath given up the ghost:*" lit., She hath breathed out her life, as if in laboured sighs: expiring in heavy heart-breaths of grief. (Comp. Job xxxi. 39.)

"*Her sun is gone down while it was yet day.*" "The sun of *her life* sets before the evening has been reached." (Comp. Amos viii. 9.)—*Keil.*

"The sun of her life, and the *happiness* (comp. Mal. iii. 20, Psa. lxxxiv. 12) which she had in her sons, is gone down."—*Naeg.*

Connecting these verses with the ill-fated battle of Megiddo, and accepting these words as descriptive, most commentators regard them as depicting the consternation of Jerusalem at that disastrous event. If so, *the going down of the sun while it was yet day* holds an apt reference to the eclipse which occurred on Sept. 30, B.C. 610.

Theme: LIFE PREMATURELY CLOSED. Text: "Her sun is gone down while it was yet day." Specially applicable to a useful Christian life cut off by death in the midst of its years.

I. A lustrous life. She was our "sun." In the horizon of our *home*, or our *church*, or our *friendships*, she glowed, and with her radiant character and gleaming ministries gladdened all.

1. A *conspicuous* life: of worth, of usefulness, of eminence.

2. A *beneficent* life: giving out good and gladness to others.

3. An *illuminated* life. For God gave the sun its glory. All our excellences, all our power of usefulness, are His gifts. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth *His handiwork*." Yes: and "we are *His workmanship*." "The Lord gives grace and glory."

II. A lustrous life prematurely darkened. "While yet day."

1. The course of human life is *not of uniform duration.*

2. The *most benignant and beautiful life* may suddenly end. Though we be robed with grace and living for Christ, that does not assure to us length of days.

3. *When a beautiful life ends, preternatural gloom ensues.* Some deaths cause no bewailing. It is a tribute to the worth of a life that it is so *missed* and so *lamented.* "Devout men made lamentation over him."

III. A lustrous life prematurely set will again rise and shine. All lives are not lustrous, yet all lives must set in the grave. Death comes to all sooner or later. Our lives differ in degree of grace and glory. Our deaths therefore differ. All will *rise* again, but *not all to shine.* "Then shall the *righteous* shine forth," &c.

1. *Comfort* in this thought. The sun will again rise and shine. So will the cherished life we mourn as having "gone down."

2. *Inspiration* in this thought. Radiant careers on earth will glow with splendour hereafter. Therefore, "Let your light shine before men." Live beneficent lives.

3. *Satisfaction* in this thought. Life is not a blunder; death is not a catastrophe. Sudden death is sudden blessedness. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." The soul whom Jesus robes with beauty, and is thus beloved and beneficent while on earth, does not cease its ministry. All the grace of

Christ is not bestowed in vain. Death spoils nothing. The life is hid from our vision by the darkness into which it has "gone down;" but it shall rise again, and shine in the light of God.

4. *Warning* in this thought. We cannot calculate upon years. "This night thy soul may be required of thee."

See *Addenda:* EARLY DEATH.

Ver. 15–9. *Theme:* BEAUTIFUL BUT BRIEF. "Her sun is gone down while it was yet day."

The text is part of a gloomy description of Israel's decline. We take it from the context and use it topically, as an appropriate description of the end of a brief but beautiful life. Of our friend it may be said that—

I. Her life was like the sun in its shining.

1. It was gloriously bright with faith and joy.

2. It was blessedly useful in diffusing light.

3. It was constantly comforting, by its warmth of love, and hope.

4. It was Christianly generous, always giving.

5. It was a centre of attraction, in the house, in the class, in the social circle, and in the church.

II. Her death was like the sun in its setting.

1. Gradual. 2. Beautiful.
3. Peaceful. 4. To rise again.

III. Her sunset was early in the day of life.

1. In the prime and beauty of being.

2. In the midst of work.

3. It seems unnatural, and suggests questions.

4. It is an interposition of God in His Providence, doubtless wise and loving.

5. It leads us from the creature to the Creator.

6. It suggests that we be all ready, always ready, "at such an hour as ye think not."—*W. Whale.*

Vers. 15–9. *Theme:* PREMATURE SUNSET.

An expressive metaphor. Not true to nature, because the history so described was not natural. Both heaven and earth were called upon to express surprise (Isa. i. 2, 3). Unnatural conduct leads to an unnatural end, the wicked shall not live out half their days. Sunset is one of the most beautiful sights in nature, but a sudden, stormy hiding of the sun at midday is calculated to fill the beholder with distress. Such is the metaphor. Let us contemplate it—

I. In nature.

1. *It would be unnatural.*

2. *It would be injurious to all life.*

3. *It would make us less confident, as to the unerring regularity of nature's law.*

II. In history. We see many cases in which nations have fallen, not with the decrepitude of age, but through early and self-wrought ruin. The Old World, Sodom, Nineveh, Babylon, &c., &c. The case of Jerusalem conspicuous (Matt. xxiii. 37–39).

III. In individual life. The young—the immoral—the unprincipled in character generally. Obedience to God gives a long day and beautiful sunset.

The text may be used topically for a funeral sermon, in the case of a young woman.—*W. Whale.*

Theme: THOUGHTS UPON DEATH. "She hath given up the ghost, her sun is gone down while it was yet day."

1. Death is a solemn event; it is the end of our probationary state, and the beginning of a new and unchanging state of being—and it is of frequent occurrence.

2. No class can escape from the state of death. The aged cannot live long, and the young may be cut down *in the noonday of life.*

I. Death dissolves our connection with the world.

1. Dissolves all natural relationship.
2. Ends dangers and perils.
3. Takes away the means of grace.
4. Closes our probationary state.
5. Discloses our eternal needs.

II. Death is the departure of the soul to another state.

1. It does not sink into insensibility as does the body. The soul lives.

2. Should death come now, how would it find us?

III. The change at death is very great.

1. The mode of its occurrence is, to us now, very mysterious.

2. It is an awful event to the ungodly and impenitent.

IV. Though the event is certain, the time is uncertain.

V. The solemnity of the event is realised by all who think seriously upon it.

VI. Death will leave us in this separate state until the last judgment. Means of grace must be improved; salvation of the soul must be secured before the welfare of the body. Preparation for death is necessary for all, for all must die. "Prepare to meet thy God."—*Old MS.*

Vers. 11–14 *considered together:*

"The sense seems to be this—

i. The Lord does not vouchsafe to give a direct answer to the prophet's complaints and murmurings concerning his own condition and calling. By this silence He administers a tacit rebuke to Jeremiah for speaking in a spirit of sullenness and discontent.

ii. He turns aside to Jerusalem, and explains His dispensations towards her, and thus by implication He replies to Jeremiah. He says to her (ver. 11) *I will afflict thee for good, and will make thine enemies to entreat thee.*

This was fulfilled in the kind treatment that the Hebrew captives received from their conquerors, even Nebuchadnezzar in the case of Daniel and the three children; and of Belshazzar, and of Cyrus, Darius, Ahasuerus, and Artaxerxes in succession, after the days of Nebuchadnezzar. Even the captive king of Judah, Jehoiachin, was treated kindly at Babylon by Evil-Merodach.

iii. The prophet answers, Can this be true? Can iron break the northern iron and steel? Can the Hebrew nation have any power against the mighty power of the northern realm of Chaldea?

iv. No, answers the Lord, this will be done by their own power. The iron of Jerusalem will not break the iron and steel of Babylon. On the contrary, turning to Jerusalem, He says, *I will give thy substance to the spoil for thy sins, and will make thee to pass into the land which thou knowest not.* But yet, I who scatter thee for thy sins in My wrath, will chasten thee for *thy good* (ver. 11). Thus God always tempered judgment with mercy in His dealings with His people."—*Wordsworth.*

[See also Sectional treatment, p. 316.]

Ver. 10. *Theme:* A TROUBLOUS PREACHER TROUBLED. *Alas! a man of strife.*

"Even those who are not quiet and peaceable, if they serve God faithfully, are often made *men of strife.* We can but *follow peace;* we have the making only of one side of the bargain, and therefore can but *as much as in us lies* live peaceably."—*Henry.*

Jeremiah's case suggests—

I. Distraction over the results of a faithful ministry. "I am for peace, but they are for war." It was not that he strove with them, but they with him and his work for God. Yet no one can rebuke sinners without stirring antagonism. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" "These men which turn the earth upside down are come hither also!" "Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"

1. A fearful witness for God cannot win popular favour.

2. Hostility to his work is sure to pain the true preacher's heart.

II. Innocence of blame for the antagonism aroused. Had Jeremiah been a *bad debtor,* or *disobeying creditor,* they could not have acted more virulently towards him.

1. Hostility to a faithful preacher is *unreasonable* and *unjust.* "Why, what evil hath He done?" asked Pilate of the incensed crowd.

2. History repeats itself in the harsh usage borne by God's ministers. "Which of the prophets have ye not persecuted?" So with Rutherford, Wesley, Bunyan, &c. The natural man, at enmity with God, will not be at peace with the man of God who convinces him of his sin. Fashion still scorns the faithful and evangelical preacher. Public bodies are at strife with religious societies and Christian alliances which resist measures for the desecration of the Lord's day, &c

See *Addenda:* A TROUBLED MINISTRY.

III. Despondent misapprehension of a Divine mission. Jeremiah in a doleful mood only saw the "strife" he had aroused. Moments when our best work shows only ill results. All workers for Christ "go forth weeping." Good work is often done with pain. We cannot see all the blessed effects of godly service. But "woe is unto us, if we preach not." Courage and grace can alone prevent us from "fainting in the day of adversity," and enable us to continue "faithful unto death."

See *Noticeable Topics:* "MEN OF PROGRESS, MEN OF STRIFE."

Comments—

Ver. 11. *The Lord said, Verily, &c. Henderson* renders the verse thus: "Jehovah saith, Have I not set thee free for good? Have I not made the enemy take thy part in the time of calamity and in the time of distress?" Dr. Gotch (in Eyre & Spottiswoode's "Revised English Bible") translates: "Verily, I set thee free for thy good; verily, I will cause the enemy to make supplication to thee, in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction."

"The rendering of the A. V., *thy remnant*, gives an untrue sense. It would mean all the rest of Jeremiah's days, which were by no means days of happiness. Nor had he even at last a period of tranquillity. But *thy loosing* means thy being set free, thy deliverance, and this sense is satisfactory."—*Payne Smith.*

"*Entreat thee well:*" rather, supplicate thee; fulfilled in chaps. xxi. 1, 2; xxxvii. 3; xlii. 2.

i. *God's despised prophet will be found useful.* "In the time of evil, and in the time of affliction."

ii. *Maledictions will give place to supplications.* "Affliction" wonderfully changes the tone and temper of those who once hated and resisted the messenger of Heaven. The day of pride will soon close.

iii. *Divine protection overshadows His faithful witnesses.* Surrounded with strife, yet Jehovah both guards and ultimately vindicates His servants.

Ver. 12. *Theme:* THE NORTHERN IRON AND STEEL. "Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?"

The Jews treated Jeremiah so harshly and unjustly, that he feared they would break his heart; they smote him as with an iron rod, and he felt like one crushed beneath their unkindness.

God never did, and never will, place a man in a trying position and then leave him. If the rebellious seed of Israel were iron, the Lord declared that His prophet should be hardened by sustaining grace into northern iron and steel. If they beat upon him like hammers on an anvil, he should be made of such strong, enduring texture, that he should be able to resist all their blows. Iron in the olden times amongst the Israelites was very coarsely manufactured, but the best was the iron from the north. So bad was their iron generally, that an admixture of brass, which amongst us would be thought rather to deteriorate the hardness, was regarded as an improvement; so the Lord puts it, "Shall iron—the common iron—break the most firm and best-prepared iron?"

This is a proverbial expression, applicable to many other matters besides that of the prophet and the Jews; it is clearly meant to show that

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A PURPOSE THERE MUST BE SUFFICIENT FORCE. The weaker cannot overcome the stronger. In a general clash the firmest will win. You cannot cut granite with a penknife, nor drill a hole in a rock with an auger of silk. We shall apply this proverb—

I. To the people of God individually. Shall any power be able to destroy the saints? Weak as they are, they will tread down the strength of their foes. There is a force about them which cannot be put down.

1. Many Christians are subjected to great *temptations and persecutions;* mocked, ridiculed, called by evil names. Persecuted one, will you deny the faith? If so, you are not made of the same stuff as the true disciple of Jesus Christ; for when the grace of God is in them, if the world be iron, they are northern iron and steel. Will

you shrink in the day of trial? Do you mean to play the coward? "Shall the iron break the northern iron and steel?" Be strong. Quit you like men; and, in the energy of the Holy Ghost, endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

2. We are frequently called to *serve God amid great difficulties.* Some of you who go to the lodging-houses to speak, who visit the alleys, &c., find much annoyance and disappointment. Will you say, there is no converting these dark and obdurate souls? Is the iron to break the northern iron and steel? Are we to give way under difficulties? Look at Mont Cenis Tunnel, made through one of the hardest rocks; with a sharp tool, edged with diamond, they have pierced the Alps. As St. Bernard says: "*Is thy work hard? set a harder resolution against it; for there is nothing so hard that cannot be cut with something harder still.*"

3. To labour *with non-success,* and *to wait,* is hard work. It is a grand thing for a Christian to continue patiently in well-doing. He is a man who under long-continued disappointment will not

> "Bate a jot
> Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
> Right onward."

The well-annealed steel within him ere long breaks in shivers the common iron which strikes him so severely. To him to overcome by grace is glory indeed.

See *Addenda:* BE NOT DISCOURAGED.

II. Applicable to the cause of God in the world — to the Church. What power, however like to iron, shall suffice to break the kingdom of Jesus, which is comparable to steel?

1. We hear it said that *Romanism* will again vanquish England; that the Gospel light, which Latimer helped to kindle, will be extinguished. Atrocious nonsense, if not partial blasphemy. If this thing were of men, it would come to nought; but if it be of God, who shall overthrow it? As surely as the Lord liveth the end of Romish Antichrist will come, and the long-expected cry shall be heard, "Babylon the great is fallen."

2. Others foretell the *triumph of infidelity.* Consider what these gloomy forebodings mean? That the gates of hell *are* to prevail against the Church; that the pleasure of the Lord is *not* to prosper in His hand. Who but a lying spirit would thus lay low the faith and confidence of God's people? Infidelity and Socinianism have ready tongues, but every tongue that rises against the Church in judgment He will condemn. The Church can bear the blows of Ritualism and Infidelity, and survive them all, and be better for them too. The iron will never break the northern iron and steel.

See *Addenda:* EVIL SHALL NOT PREVAIL.

III. Apply the principle to the self-righteous efforts which men make for their own salvation. The iron will never break the northern iron and steel.

1. *The bonds of guilt are not to be snapped by a merely human power.* Habits of sin yield not to the raspings of unregenerate resolves. All your efforts apart from Jesus are utterly useless. He must bring liberty—you cannot emancipate yourselves.

2. Yet that were an easy task compared with a man *renewing his own heart.*

3. Do you think you can *force your way to heaven by ceremony?* There is no potency in baptism, confirmation, outward ceremonies of man's devising or of God's instituting, to deliver you from the bonds which hold you. Come, sinner, with thy fetters; lay thy wrist at the cross-foot, where Christ can break the iron at once.

IV. Applicable to all persons who are making self-reliant efforts for the good of others. How are we driven to the conclusion that it is "not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God." Man's heart is very hard; it is like the northern iron and steel.

1. *Our preaching*—we try to make it forcible—how powerless it is of itself! We plead, reason, seek goodly words, &c., but the northern iron and steel remain immovable. The cries and tears of a Whitfield would not avail

Though all the Apostles reasoned with them, they would turn a deaf ear.

2. *The best-adapted means* cannot succeed. *A mother's tears*, as she spoke to you of Jesus; *the pleadings of a grey-headed father* over you—no power to change your heart! *The Gospel*, though put to you very tenderly by those you love best, leaves you unsaved still! You *have been sick*, near death, within an inch of doom; yet even *the judgments of God* have not aroused you. But it is not Ezekiel's duty to make the dry bones live: whether they live or not, it is his duty to prophesy to them. Go on with your work, but let a sense of your personal inability make you fall back upon your God. Let it keep you from self-reliant prayer or work, much more from one self-confident sermon or address. God will have us feel that the iron cannot break the northern iron and steel.

V. This text has a very solemn application to all those who are rebels against God. Fight against God, would you? Measure your Adversary, I charge you. The wax is about to wrestle with the flame, the tow to contend with the fire. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Cast down your weapons. Come now, and ask for reconciliation; but oh, resist no longer, for the iron cannot break the northern iron and steel. —*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No.* 993.

Comments—

Ver. 12. *Shall iron break? &c.* This simile is variously interpreted Thus:—"By the iron is meant Jeremiah's intercession; but this cannot alter the Divine purpose to send Judah into exile, which is firm as steel and brass."—*Payne Smith.*

"Can trouble and affliction, though hard as iron, break one who, like Jeremiah, is firm as steel and brass?"—*Rashi* and *Umbreit.*

"Not even iron, much less the Jews, could resist the northern Colossus of the Chaldean empire."—*Ewald* and *Henderson.*

Others, by northern iron,—*i.e.*, the steel made by the Chalybes on the Pontus.—understand the obduracy of the Jews, which not even iron could break.

"Can I, Jeremiah, even if I be iron, break the obduracy of the people hard as steel or brass?"—*Graf.*

The *Targum* regards "the iron" as Pharaoh-Necho, and "the steel and brass" as Nebuchadnezzar.

"Though there be great hardness in you (Jews), can it yet break that which is in the Assyrians? but ye are not equal to them. The prophet's design was to divest the Jews of the false confidence in which they boasted."—*Calvin.*

"God had made him (Jeremiah) an 'iron pillar and a wall of brass,' and He asks, now, was it possible for his enemies to destroy him whom God had thus made?"—*John Owen.*

[*Vide* next verse.]

Ver. 13. "*For all thy sins, even in all thy borders.*" These words at once show that it is not the prophet who is addressed in the verse preceding, but the Jewish people.

"*To the spoil without price,*" *i.e.*, "not making thee any compensation, but inflicting these losses upon thee as a punishment for thy sins."—*Dr. Blayney.*

"As God sells His people for nought, *i.e.*, gives them up to their enemies (comp. Isa. lii. 3, Ps. xliv. 13), so here He threatens to deliver their treasures to the enemy as a booty, and for nought."—*Keil.*

"Three things are said:—

"i. *That God would give Judah's treasures away for nothing.* It is an act of contempt, implying that He did not value them.

"ii. *The cause of this contempt is Judah's sins.*

"iii. *This is justified by the extent of those sins.* Judah had committed them everywhere, throughout her whole land."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

Ver. 15. *Theme:* THE DESIRE TO BE REMEMBERED. "O Lord, Thou knowest; remember me and visit me."

Jeremiah desires many things; but the thing he asks first, as including all the rest, is that God would not let him drop out of sight and thought.

I. The perpetually recurring phrase, "God knows," expresses a mood of thought common to rational creatures.

A craving everywhere to be remembered. From the lips of the dying, from friends of whom we are taking our farewell, fall the words, "Remember me." Those ambitious minds, not content that their memorial should be kept in a few hearts, labour that their names may be remembered by multitudes. Oblivion appals us.

The moralist can easily show the *vanity of this desire*, and the emptiness of the end. What good will it do you, he asks, to be remembered when you are out amid Australian wilds, or on the parched plains of India? what harm would it do you to be forgot?

Enough for us that He who made us so made us that, *by the make of our being, we desire to be kindly remembered.*

II. This desire, then, is in our nature; and the prophet shows us the right direction in which to train it.

Pointing us to the heaven above us, he bids us seek to be remembered there! The thought *that such a prayer may be offered* to God, teaches us a great deal of His kindliness, condescension, and thoughtful care. You feel that you are speaking to a *Real Person* in offering a prayer like this—not to some vague, undefined "Great First Cause least understood," but to a merciful Father in heaven, who looks down upon His child, and, "like as a father pitieth his children, pitieth them that fear Him."

It was while looking upon the kindly human face of CHRIST that the *whole heart's wish of the poor penitent thief* went out in the "Lord, remember me!"

It was in special *clearness of revelation of God's love* that the Psalmist was emboldened to say, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

III. Consider the encouraging view of the Hearer of Prayer implied in the words of the prophet's petition.

The petition was an acceptable one, and it was right that he offered it. "Remember me," said he, in his day of sorrow, to God.

1. He was *not staggered, as he drew near in prayer, by intruding doubt* whether the Almighty would listen to his poor words or consider his heart's desires. David, psalmist and king, knew this dread: "When I consider Thy heavens, . . . *what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or visit him?*" Jeremiah almost repeats these ideas: "*Remember* and *visit* me." What a steady faith in God is in this prayer! Coming like a little child to the great Father, the little voice pleads, "Do not forget *me!*"

2. It is *not presumption, but faith, that speaks here.* Be sure that when your prayer is earnest and sincere, and offered in simple faith in Christ the Mediator, you never spoke words to your nearest neighbour that he heard more distinctly than the Almighty hears that prayer. And you may press upon Him all your small requests, and tell out to Him all that concerns you, saying, "O Lord, remember *me* and visit *me.*"

3. Ponder for your comfort that *God "thinketh upon"* you; that He "knoweth your frame, and remembereth that you are dust."

IV. In such individuality of prayer there is no selfishness. It is not the wish to be distinguished and favoured above other children of the family. It is but the wish to be *remembered even as the others.* It is but that when Christ, the Great Intercessor, speaks to Almighty God for Himself and His brethren of mankind, saying, in the name of all, "*Our* Father," *the poor sinner should not be left out.* So he puts forth a trembling hand, lifts a feeble voice, and cries, "Bless *me* also;" "Lord, remember *me*," &c.

V. Mark what simple trust in God's wisdom and kindness is implied in the offering of such a petition.

1. *Everything is asked in that.* It was enough just to put one's-self under God's eye, just to get God to think of one at all. If God would but remember us. *He would see all our wants*, and *be willing to give us all.* The thief on the cross felt that. Only "*remember me*," and all will be right.

2. Further it is assumed, that if God remembers us it will *be in love.*

Remember how Joseph, in the dungeon, asked the chief butler to think of him; and said *how* he desired to be thought of, "*and show kindness unto me*," &c. But there is no need to specify how we wish God would remember us.

3. Further. God's remembrance *is practical*. He comes to our help. The want remembered will be relieved.

4. Doubtless there is *a season in the history of the unconverted man* in which he can have no real desire that God should remember him: he rather desires to keep out of God's sight and remembrance. To be sure that every word and deed is going down in "the book of God's remembrance" is the very last thing the utterly ungodly man would wish.

5. Yet the prayer expresses the *first reaching after God of the awakened soul*. "Remember me!" cried prophet, psalmist, penitent thief.

If we make it our desire and prayer to be remembered by our Saviour and God, we need not fear that we shall pass from His recollection. Others we loved may forget us. But amid all the care of this universe, He will stoop down to think of us—never forgotten by *Him!* In our dark days and weak faith we may be ready to think we have passed from His thoughts. There is no such experience but believers have passed through before us. Thousands of years since *our* doubts and fears were felt, and God supplied the perfect answer. Listen to the *ancient words of doubt*, and *God's blessed* answer: "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and *my God hath forgotten me.*"

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, *yet will I not forget thee.*"—*A. K. H. B.*, condensed from "*Counsels and Comfort*," &c.

See *Addenda:* ON BEING REMEMBERED.

Ver. 15. *Theme:* PRAYER. "O Lord, Thou knowest; remember me and visit me, and revenge me," &c.

Jeremiah had prayed earnestly for the people and without success. In offering supplication for himself he found favour with God. In his prayer the pain and troubles of his life were laid before God, and the questionings of his heart were not kept back. Observe—

I. **Divine knowledge is no hindrance to prayer.** "Thou knowest": 1. *My character;* 2. *My condition;* 3. *My need.* Yet, though Thou knowest, yea, *because* Thou knowest, I will pray to Thee.

II. **Divine condescension an encouragement to prayer.**

1. *Remember me.*
2. *Visit me.*
3. *Vindicate me.* "Revenge" means only vindication.

III. **Human need a stimulus to prayer.** He was poor, persecuted, and in peril.

Where could he go for help?

He is *driven* to God by trouble, and *drawn* by lovingkindness.

IV. **The vicissitudes of life suggest topics for prayer.** Poverty, weakness, want, affliction, persecution, temptation, —the sins and sorrows of others. The needs of the world, &c.

V. **Conscious sincerity gives freedom in prayer.** "I have suffered for thy sake."

VI. **The mediation of Christ gives efficacy to our prayer.** "I have not joined in their sins" (ver. 10).—*W. Whale.*

Ver. 16. *Theme:* ENJOYING GOD'S WORD. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them . . . rejoicing."

The people of God have always a relief in prayer, in the worst circumstances. Jonah cried out of the belly of hell, "Yet will I look again." David *encouraged himself.* Jesus, "being in an agony, prayed." Jeremiah, borne down by the storms of the world, prayed, "O Lord, thou knowest, remember, visit me." The disciples took up the body of John, and went and told Jesus.

Remember, the best thing you can do with your trouble is to take it to Him. Sanctioned by highest authority: "Is any afflicted, let him pray."

Attested by experience: of all the millions that tried it, not one but will say, "It is good for me to draw nigh to God." Creatures cannot help when they would; will not when they can, but God both can and will be "a present help."

Jeremiah found it so. And he backs his prayer by an important PLEA. He avouches the serenity of his character, "Thy words were found;" the reality of his experience, "I did eat them;" his past joys in religion, "they were the rejoicing;" the particular relationship he bore to the God of grace, "I am called by Thy name."

Need not confine it to Jeremiah; apply it to self. Take it as a test by which to try the reality of your religion.

THE VIEWS IT AFFORDS OF PERSONAL RELIGION. It implies—

I. A high valuation for this word. It is prized *as* God's word, and SOUGHT under that character.

Love to the word of God is a sure sign of a gracious heart. A neglected Bible is a sign of a graceless heart. How many read the books and writings of men who never read the Book of God! *When God Himself turns author, some will not give His works a reading;* but Christians prize the word, and prove it by searching into it (David, Ps. xix.)

Thy word. It partakes of the *divinity of its Author.* As Phidias, a self-evidencing power.

It is *adapted to the nature of its subject;* suited to man. A key fitted to unlock such a heart.

It has *produced most astonishing effects.* Infancy and age. If the slightest agency draws from the truth, the slightest agency recovers. If Peter fell by a look, he rose by a look.

1. *Have you found this word?*
2. *Has this word found you?*

A poor sailor was cast away—lost his all. The first half-crown he obtained, he inquired where to make a purchase, of what?—that neglected book, a BIBLE.

"I have many books," says Mr. Newton, "that I cannot sit down to read; they are indeed good and sound, but, like halfpence, there goes a great quantity to a little amount. There are silver books and a very few golden books, but I have one worth more than all, called the Bible, and that is a book of bank-notes." *Apply this test:*

II. A personal experience of its power. "I did *eat* it."

This is different from speculation. David does not say, Listen and hear, but, "Taste and see." Apply to him for yourself instead of relying on the authority of others. As in a case of disputed relish, you determine not by testimony, but by taste. In other words, it means *experience.* Experience is knowledge derived from experiment, in contradiction from theory.

We are apt to confound familiarity with knowledge. Many are familiar with all the truths and doctrines, but have not the experience of the power of one. Like Bunyan's Talkative. Like Balaam, who saw the visions of God and was proud of what he saw—but no experience. Like Judas, who preached and wrought miracles, but died despairing. How worthless this knowledge! To know the way, but never walk in it. To know there is an ark, but never enter it. To know Christ is a crucified and almighty Saviour, but, like the dying thief, never to apply to Him.

The knowledge of which you boast will aggravate your doom. Like Uriah with his fatal letter, place you in the forefront of battle.

But religion is not only something to be *known*, but something to be *experienced.* Religion is the life of the soul as the soul is the life of the body. Truth is the sustenance of the moral man. Divine truth must be incorporated with the elements of the intellectual nature or we perish. "Except ye eat the flesh." Put *test* of experience. A sign of spiritual decay, and the loss of spiritual health, when this word is undervalued, when men can spend days and weeks without reading it.

When you come to the word, remember that Divine influence can alone make it effectual. As you say grace before meat, let your reading be preceded by prayer. "I will be as dew." How sweet the fragrance after the dew!

III. A conscious participation of

the happiness it produces. "It was the rejoicing of my heart." How does it promote joy?

i. *By the light it imparts to the understanding.* Truly, light is sweet. It preserves us from dark uncertainty; from the dubiety of suspense; from the vacillation of doubt; from the fluctuation of undetermined choice. It gives decision to the judgment. It fully occupies the mind upon the noblest subject. It engages faculties and powers in God's service.

ii. *By the relief it gives to the conscience.* In the hope of pardon and acceptance. Sprinkled from an evil conscience.

iii. *By the exercise it affords to the best affections of the heart.* Love to God is a source of happiness; love to man, a source of happiness. The pleasures of benevolence are genuine pleasures; allied to the happiness of God Himself. He is the BLESSED God, the HAPPY God. HAPPY in the diffusion of happiness; BLESSED in the impartation of blessedness. "I will bless thee." How? By making thee a blessing. And taste the joy of God. Misery of malevolent affections; happiness of kind ones. As delight springs from the play of good feelings, so misery springs from the play and interchange of bad ones. There are virtues sweet to the taste of inner man; vices bitter and corroding to the heart. Scowl of malice, the malignity of revenge. *Gall of bitterness.*

iv. *By the consolations and hopes under sorrow.* The paper is yet extant on which martyr Smith recorded his experience. They gave him pen and ink to sign a draft on the treasurer; he did so, and in the corner put down these figures, "1 Cor. iv. 8, 9."

IV. A sense of consecration. "I am called by Thy name."

Improvement:

1. It reproves those who never seek.

2. Those who are content with knowledge without experience.

3. Those who are strangers to religious peace and joy. If you eat, it will be joy.

4. Those who neither own God's name, nor are owned of Him.—*Samuel Thodey*, 1837.

See *Addenda:* ENJOYING GOD'S WORD.

Theme: FOUND, EATEN, AND ENJOYED.

These words appear to be part of the prophet's prayer, and were given to account for the fact that he had suffered rebuke, &c., from the people. It is the only verse containing any pleasant reference to Jeremiah's experience, and then it is in connection with God's word, and not with man's dealings. It is as if he said, "In the midst of my sufferings and sorrows, I came upon the promises of God's word; I seized upon them with avidity; so great was my need of comfort. I devoured them; and indeed my soul was comforted. They led me to meditate upon my fellowship with Jehovah, and to see that even my sufferings were for His name's sake. The word was unto me 'the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.'" Here we observe—

I. That an important discovery was made. "Thy words were found."

1. *Words are the representatives of thought.* They are of value for this reason. Words have great power to move men's minds. How much have they affected the destiny of nations, and the development of great enterprises? Demosthenes, Cicero, Luther, Knox, Whitfield, Brougham, &c.

2. *Words derive much of their power from the mind which utters them.* Truth is truth come whence it may, but *truth* may be spoken by most men without having much power to do others good. The stroke of a *royal* pen may mean liberty or slavery, peace or war to millions. *God's words* are *a hammer, a fire, a sword, a balm, a saving, sanctifying* power to men who receive and obey them.

3. *That which is found must previously have existed.* God's words were found. A grand discovery, not an invention. Treasure is not made by man, but the discoverer has much fame, and confers upon the race great benefits. God's word exists whether men find it or not. He who finds it is wise, rich, and happy. It is the living word. Seek Him. Seek, and ye shall find.

II. That a peculiar method of appropriation was adopted. "I did eat them."

1. *It implies soul hunger.* Caused by stress of duty, and pressure of persecution, and multiplied sorrows.

2. *It affirms that God's words are soul food.* The soul may be starved, or may feed on husks; but if the appetite be right and rightly directed, only God and His word will satisfy. (Ezek. iii. 1–3, Rev. x. 9, Ps. cxix. 103.) God's word is *wholesome, nourishing, savoury, saving.*

III. That a delightful experience was realised. "It was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Joy and rejoicing—

1. *In what the word revealed of God.*

2. *In the way that revelation met his utmost need.* In work, in trouble, in danger.

3. *In the knowledge of salvation there unfolded.*

4. *In the prospects to which the attention of God's servants was directed.*

Note—

1. Jeremiah's religion was a religion of the word.

2. Jeremiah's religion was a religion of the heart.

3. Jeremiah's religion was a religion of rejoicing.

IV. That an emphatic public testimony was given. "I am called by thy name," &c.

1. *God's name was called upon him.* (See *Margin.*) As the saving power, and source of hope and joy, the name of Christ has been called upon us.

2. *He was called by God's name.* As a professor, a prophet, a servant, &c. We are called by Christ's name.

3. *He was strengthened by God in all his works.* Jehovah was to him "The Lord of hosts," inspiring with courage, leading to battle, giving the victory, distributing rewards.

APPLICATION—

1. The word discovered—a treasure.

2. The word in the heart—a joy.

3. The word on the lips—a message.

4. The word in the hand—a weapon.

—*W. Whale.*

Theme: GOD'S WORD THE JOY OF THE GODLY.

Bread is sweet to the hungry. Man, when quickened by God, does "not live by bread alone, but by every word," &c. One of God's children could say, "I have esteemed the words of Thy mouth more than my neces-ary food." (Also Ps. cxix. 72; xix. 10.)

i. BIBLE HISTORY, in its development of THE PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT, is to a man of God deeply instructive: "the joy and rejoicing of his heart."

ii. PROPHECY, teaching us that THE FUTURE IS KNOWN TO THE LORD, the future of the Church, the world, and of every child of man; and that nothing unseen by us can arise to thwart His designs, becomes a very fountain of delight to every good man: "the joy and rejoicing of his heart."

iii. The words of the Lord as EMBODIED IN LAW, prohibiting nothing but what the enlightened conscience condemns, and commanding nothing but what that conscience approves, constrain the righteous man to say, "Oh, how I love Thy law!" Conformity to the law is his earnest solicitude, and when love is perfected this desire will be realised, for "love is the fulfilling of the law."

iv. But if the words of the Lord in history, prophecy, and law are sweet, sweeter still are His words as they sound forth in the GOSPEL OF HIS SON. They are "no cunningly-devised fables" to the soul that has seen the adaptation of the great doctrines of the Gospel to its moral and spiritual needs.

Faith is a living upon the truths of the Gospel: "Eating" them. Faith makes both the truth, and Christ the substance of the truth, precious. "Unto you which believe He is precious."—*Rev. D. Pledge, "Walks with the Prophet Jeremiah."*

Theme: THE PROPHET ON HIS WATCH-TOWER.

I. The discovery. God's "words."

1. Sometimes hidden.

2. Yet expected.

3. And sought.

II. The treasure used. "Did eat them."

Made them his own. The taste both bitter and sweet.

III. The result. "The joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

Joy (1) in knowing God's will.

Joy (2) in seeing the working out of God's goodness.—*S. Farren.*

Theme: HIDDEN MANNA.

I. A memorable discovery. "Thy words were found."

Many have heard God's word for years, yet have never *found* it. "Eyes have they, but they see not; ears, but hear not." Oh that they had found the "treasure hid in the field!"

What is meant by finding God's words?

1. A thing found has usually to be *sought for.* Happy is he who reads or hears the Scriptures, searching all the while for the hidden spiritual sense. (See Prov. ii. 4, 5.)

2. To find God's word means that we have been *made to understand them* (1 Cor. iii. 14). The Bible is a dull book till illuminated; a tantalising riddle till you get the key; but, the clue once found, it absorbs our attention, delights our intellect, and enriches our heart.

3. Means *to appropriate it as belonging to yourself.* Reading a will is not interesting till you find you have a part in it.

See *Addenda:* APPROPRIATING GOD'S WORD.

II. An eager reception. "I did eat them."

Not "I did hear them." Herod heard John gladly, yet became his murderer. Not "I did *learn them by heart.*" Hundreds have committed chapters to memory, yet were wearied rather than benefited. Not "I did *repeat* them," as a parrot repeats language it is taught. "I did EAT them." What is meant by *eating* them?

1. *An eager study.* Greedy for the truth. Some professors grow squeamish and proudly delicate. My soul hungered even to ravenousness to be fed upon the bread of heaven.

2. *Cheerful reception.* My soul was in love with the word.

3. *An intense belief.* Not questioning it, but living upon it. The language means, besides, both *the diligent treasuring* up of the truth, and *the inward digestion* of the same. It is not the hasty swallowing of the word which is blessed to us, but a deliberate eating of it. It then becomes dissolved and absorbed—a part of the eater's very existence.

III. The happy consequences. "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

1. Hold the truth *in its entirety and harmony*, and then it will be joy to your heart.

Jeremiah first speaks of God's "words," then he changes the number and speaks of God's "*word.*" We are not only to receive parts of the Gospel, but *the whole of it.* That man's heart is right with God who can honestly say that *all* the testimonies of God are dear to him. There are threatenings, and precious promises; testimonies of Jesus. Receive the whole of God's word.

2. The word of God would have given no joy had he not *been obedient to it.*

3. Yet there are *certain choice truths in God's word*, especially joy-giving: the doctrine of *election*, to know that you are called and predestinated; and of *the immutability of divine love.*

IV. A distinguishing title. "I am called by Thy name," &c.

1. The name of the Lord of hosts was reviled in Jeremiah's day, yet he felt it *an honour to be associated with the Lord in this contempt.* Oh ye who love the Lord Jesus, never shun the scandal of the cross!

2. Some *do not count it a fair thing to bear the name of the Most High.* It is a disgrace to any man that his Lord should die for his soul on Calvary and yet he be afraid to wear His livery. To confess Christ is so easy a burden; it involves so temporary a loss, and so real a gain. Bow your willing back to His cross, and go with Him without the camp.—*C. H. Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No.* 980.

See *Addenda:* ENJOYING GOD'S WORD.

Ver. 17. *Theme:* THE ISOLATION RESULTING FROM CONSECRATION.

This describes the effects following

upon his appropriating God's words and becoming His prophet.

I. Separation from the frivolities of life.

1. *Deserting the company of triflers.* "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers," or *laughers.* Formerly he had joined their merry meetings; he now renounced them.

2. *Restrained the levity of his own nature.* "Nor rejoiced;" *i.e.*, did not make merry. Even innocent mirth was laid aside, and a gravity came upon him according with his renewed state and solemn mission. Just so. Paul had "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" (Rom. ix. 2).

II. Isolation under sense of a Divine trust. "I sat alone because of Thy hand;" *i.e.*, because of the impulse of the prophetic spirit in him. (Comp. 1 Kings xviii. 46, Ezek. i. 3.)

1. *Responsible duty leads us into inevitable isolation.* We cannot share it with others. We are thereby separated to a life of practical and conscious loneliness, having a "charge to keep," in which none can participate.

2. *Consecration to God's work singles out and separates us; e.g.*, one who is devoted to the ministry must live a life separated from the common pursuits and habits of youth. He is devoted to God.

3. *Expulsion from hilarious society follows avowal of religion.* The "laughers" did not want him amongst them.

III. Oppression of spirit amid prevailing impiety. "Thou hast filled us with indignation." Calvin thus comments on the word "indignation:" "He had not been slightly moved, but had been inflamed with zeal for God; for we cannot really execute the commission given us unless we be filled with indignation; that is, unless zeal for God burns inwardly, for the prophetic office requires such a fervour."

1. Taught of God, the prophet *sees the great sinfulness of the people.*

2. Recognises the *offensiveness to Jehovah, and awful heinousness of their sins.*

3. Perceives *the ruin thereby entailed* upon his nation and God's Church.

A "seer" may well be stirred to "indignation:" impetuous energy of thought and feeling, grief over sin, impatience to check the wrong which prevails, and rescue souls from impending doom. All God's prophets and preachers have had this vision of iniquity around them, and, like Paul at Athens, their spirit has been "stirred" in them as they beheld the rampant impiety which called them to their earnest ministry for Christ and souls.

Ver. 18. *Theme:* GOD APPEARS TO BE A VAIN HOPE. "Wilt Thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?"

I. Distressing experiences distort our views of God. Jeremiah's condition and feelings were peculiarly painful.

1. *Great anguish:* "pain," "wound." Such words indicate severe suffering, less physical than mental. Physical pain will throw its dark cloud over the mind. Melancholy is the result: *melan-* (black) *cholic.* In times of heavy anguish the mental state grows despondent, and its power of discernment becomes warped.

2. *Unalleviated distress:* "perpetual," "refuseth to be healed." This unmitigated trouble of mind and heart is indeed bitter to endure. Very rare. Yet many of God's children go through years of disconsolate experiences. Wave upon wave rolls over them. Ill health, disasters, bereavements. Or spiritual struggles—doubts, temptations, loss of faith, &c. A spirit thus bowed and sorely tested cannot easily think bright thoughts of God. The disciples, in consequence of the tempest and toils of one wild night, thought *Jesus* only a ghost, and "cried out for fear."

3. *Hopeless dejection.* "My wound *incurable,* refuseth to be healed." He sees no prospect of better things, and abandons himself to despair. His labours will all be in vain, his delivery of God's messages will effect no good, and his ministry will only bring more calumny and abuse upon himself. A hard lot; a black outlook. All the windows are darkened. How can he, then, think cheerfully of God?

II. Distorted views of God render religion a grave disappointment. What

comfort is left to a godly man if God become to him "as a liar?"

1. *All his sufficiency and safety were to be drawn from God.* So Jeremiah felt. He was on a difficult and perilous mission; if God failed him, he was forlorn indeed. "He had expected that, called to so high an office, there would be a perpetual interference of Providence in his behalf, instead whereof things seemed to take their natural course" (*Payne Smith*). "God had in a manner deserted him for a time, had left him to struggle with difficulties unforeseen and unexpected" (*Dr. Waterland*). What guarantee is left us if Jesus fail? Every Christian would share Jeremiah's sense of desolation.

If ever a position occurred in which we missed the succour of our Lord, we should feel forlorn. We have no *self*-sufficiency — Christ is all to us; no power of *self*-protection — He is our Saviour and shield. Let it once be possible to say, "*Thou hast failed us*," and assurance would wholly desert us; we should be "of all men most miserable."

2. *All his happiness and hopes rested in God.* He had left all to be His prophet (ver. 19). He looked for solace, befriending, serenity amid agitations, gladness when mocked and abused; for all light and promise amid his hazardous work—from the God he served Even so has the Christian disciple to "take up his cross daily and follow" Jesus. But he is not unwilling. Has not Christ said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye have peace;" "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you;" "Ye shall see Me again, and your joy shall no man take from you"? Can He *break His word of promise*—become "as a liar"? Then all happiness and hope is dead within the believer's heart.

Note the figure: "*As a liar, as waters that fail.*" *Calvin* renders the words thus: "Thou wilt be to me *as a deception of inconstant waters;*" or, "of unfaithful waters," *i.e.*, of such as flow not continually; adding, "for faithful or constant waters are those which never fail; as the Latins call a fountain inexhaustible whose spring never dries, so the Hebrews call a fountain faithful or constant which never fails either in summer or in drought. On the contrary, they call waters unfaithful which become dry; as when a well which has no perennial veins is made dry by great heat." *Wordsworth* comments "The stream of God's favour, which had flowed in a full current of love towards him, seemed suddenly to have been dried up, and he was left to perish with thirst."

The language suggests the deceptive *mirage:* which mocks thirst with illusory pictures of refreshing waters.

III. **Disappointment in God can never have a just warrant.** "*Wilt* Thou be unto me as a liar?"

1. *Despondency is a faithless interpreter.* It is as false as a crooked mirror —it reflects beauty in hideous forms.

2. *Impatience spoils our childhood sweetness.* It is a sad failing to be hastening conclusions about God and His dealings. "He that believeth should not make haste."

3. *Fidelity is an essential characteristic of God.* Immutability is impressed *on Creation.* "I change not" is a truth evident in the perennial action of majestic laws in nature; and therefore the universe endures, and "all things continue as they were from the creation of the world." In *His love and relationships to us,* "with Him is neither variableness nor shadow of turning." In *His words and promises,* "not one good thing He hath spoken shall fail to come to pass." *Hopes* cast upon Him "shall not make ashamed." And to every soul which cleaves to and *trusts in Jesus*—as Redeemer, Friend, and King, for life here and in eternity—He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Ver. 19. *Theme:* A MINISTRY OF DISCRIMINATION. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile."

God, in the freeness of His grace, apportions the reward that He promises to Jeremiah to the sense which He entertains of the greatness and difficulty of the work to which He had called him. "*Thou shalt be as My mouth*"—My re-

presentative, My acknowledged and accredited servant—here is the greatest honour that could be conferred on any man. "*Thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile, and be to the people as a fenced brazen wall*"—here is one of the most difficult and arduous duties that mortality can possibly sustain. The talents of an angel, the zeal of a seraph, if accompanied with the infirmities of humanity, must sink under the task, unless supported by Divine strength and blessing. Well then may we exclaim, "*Who is sufficient?*"

The difficulty of such a course as this, that of making full proof of our ministry, can only be understood by him who has tried it, and it certainly has not diminished since Jeremiah's time. For though we have less outward persecution, it is equally difficult in all ages to combat with the prejudices and enmity of the carnal mind; difficult to penetrate the thick disguise of character—difficult to maintain the sternest faithfulness accompanied with the purest love—to pursue the Proteus forms of ungodliness into their secret retreats, and so effectually to separate between the precious and the vile, as that we may commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Our Lord Himself who tried the experiment knew its difficulty, and His last promise was a promise to ministers: "*Lo, I am with you;*" and He has enabled us to form an estimate of the greatness of the work from the greatness of the reward, for addressing the minister, the Angel of Ephesus, He says, "*Be thou faithful and I will give,*" &c.

I. What is supposed?
II. What is required?
III. What is promised?

I. What is supposed?

1. *The vast importance and responsibility of the work assigned to ministers with a view to the welfare of their people.* "If thou separate between the precious and the vile." It is no common office, no slight responsibility. The Gospel dispensation is often spoken of as the ministry of reconciliation; but it is here presented under a new character, the ministry of *discrimination.* Christ is represented commonly as a Saviour, but He is to be regarded as a witness and a judge—*for judgment am I come into the world.* Ministers are usually considered as heralds of mercy, sons of consolation, but they are also to be considered as *messengers of heavy tidings.* Ours is an office of edification, but it is an office of separation too, *a ministry of discrimination.* We have to distinguish between truth and truth, between character and character, between holiness and sin; and to advocate the rightful claims and high supremacy of heaven against the usurped dominion of sin and hell. Ministers are to take the precious from the vile; to separate the wheat from the weeds; to distinguish the dross from the gold; to guide their hands wittingly, as Jacob did when he bestowed the blessing upon the sons of Joseph; they are sometimes to blow the silver trumpet of Jubilee, and not unfrequently to sound the trumpet of Alarm. "*A faithful ambassador is health,*" says Solomon. "*As an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.*"

2. It is further supposed that there are *some essential distinctions* between right and wrong, between good and evil, between truth and error, between the base and the honourable of character, between the precious and the vile. These distinctions are real, not nominal; essential, not arbitrary; they are regarded so by God Himself. These distinctions were originally imprinted on the mind when man was created in God's own image; and the capacity of making them still remains, as you see from the clearness with which any man can judge upon a subject of right and wrong where his own conscience is not concerned, and the zeal with which men reprobate that which is villanous and dishonourable.

3. *A standard of truth* is supposed. God has given us the rule of judgment. We have a more sure word of prophecy, and as the office of a judge is not to make the law but to declare it, so the office of a minister is not to burden the ears of people with his own doubtful speculations, but to declare the whole

counsel of God. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this rule they have no light. This is the *glass* we hold up to show you the true features of your character; this is the *lamp* we exhibit to guide your footsteps,—"*And as many as walk by this rule, peace be on them and on the Israel of God.*"

4. It is further supposed in the text that *these characters are closely intermingled*, and that there is a great *disinclination* in mankind to have the truth fully told them, and to be brought to the *decisive test*, the final decision. The tares and the wheat strangely grow together—the sheep and the goats both are found in the same pasture—the precious and the vile have some points in common. Cain and Abel both bring their offering to the Lord; Jacob and Esau both kneel for the blessing; Elijah and the priests of Baal openly build their altars on Mount Carmel; the five foolish virgins as well as the five wise ones go forth to meet the bridegroom; Judas and John both receive the passover in the supper-chamber. And we know that men halt between two opinions—they dwell on the borders of the Land of Promise—they love to know that an ark is provided, and even love to watch the progress of the building, but they obey not the summons, "*Come thou with all thy house into the ark.*"

5. One thing more is plainly supposed, that it is of the *utmost consequence to both parties*, that the separation should be made—*take forth the precious from the vile*, and the most advantageous results will immediately accrue to each. Is it not desirable to the children of God to know that they are so—that they are heirs according to the promise—that they are precious in His sight and honourable? Would it not strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, and give them the oil of joy for mourning, could we say to them beyond contradiction, "*Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works*"?

If the distinction be valuable to the *precious*, it would be scarcely less advantageous to the *vile* themselves. To be robbed of the cloak of a false profession would be no loss, for we know it does them no honour and brings them no peace. If they stood out in their true colours to their own conscience they could not suffer more, but they might be more safe. You had better meet the case at once, at its worst, and say, *Behold I am vile.*

II. What is demanded of ministers with a view to this solemn discrimination?

The text plainly demands that every effort should be used on their part to remove the willing delusions of mankind, to disabuse their blinded understandings in reference to the great things of God and Eternity and their souls' health. What, then, is necessary so far as we are concerned in separating—

1. *A plain and decisive exhibition of the truth as it is in Jesus.* We are to contend earnestly for the faith. We are, as we have opportunity, to vindicate it from the blasphemies of the infidel, the perversions of the worldling, the mistakes of the Pharisee, and the corruptions of the Antinomian. Whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, we must speak to them of the evil of sin, of the danger of continuance in it, and of the only way of escape from it. We must show them the insufficiency of the forms of godliness, the worthlessness of their own self-righteousness, the necessity of a vital union to Christ, and their positive obligations to that holiness without which no man can see the Lord.

2. *A fearless application of Scripture truth* is necessary. To the careless and thoughtless, the young man void of understanding, trained in the ways of religion, but a living plague to the circle in which he moves, hardening in sin and fast hardening against the reach of conviction: Know that "*your judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not.*" To the apostate from a religious profession: "*See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.*" To the self-satisfied formalist: "*Strive to enter.*" To the young:

"*Remember now,*" &c. To the aged: "*Escape for thy life.*" To the precious: "*Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him.*" To the vile: "*Woe to the wicked, for it shall be ill with him.*"

3. *To point ourselves and our hearers to the only Agent* who can make the word effectual.

III. What is promised? "Thou shalt be as My mouth." The accredited and approved servant — to speak in accordance with His will—be the organ of His clemency—all his authenticated messages crowned with success. None of his words to fall to the ground.

Mighty and blessed such a ministry. Surely the people among whom such a Divinely effectual ministry is carried on, would be drawn to the Saviour's feet, and souls would find grace and salvation as on the Pentecostal morning.

"Faithful ministers," says Henry, "are God's mouth to us, and we are to hear God speaking to us by them."—*Samuel Thodey*, A.D. 1823.

Comments—

Ver. 19. "*If thou return, then will I bring thee again,*" &c. "There is in God's answer a mingling of comfort and rebuke. *If thou return*—repent thee of thy doubts and think only of thy duty, *then will I bring*, &c. "I will *cause thee again* to stand before Me." To stand before a person means to be his chief officer or vicegerent, and is said of Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 1) and Elisha (2 Kings iii. 4) as God's *prophets*, of David as Saul's minister (1 Sam. xvi. 21, 22), of Solomon's counsellors (1 Kings xii. 6), and of Nebuzar-adan as commander-in-chief of Nebuchadnezzar's army (Jer. iii. 12, *marg.*)"—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"*If thou take forth the precious from the vile.*" Jeremiah was to separate in himself what was divine and holy from the dross of human passion: So many commentators. Discriminate between good and bad men, or between the good and bad in men: Other authorities favour this rendering.

"*Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.*" Rather, "They shall return unto thee, but thou shalt not." &c.

"A flattering prophet perishes with the people whom his soft speeches have confirmed in their sin; but the truthful speaking of God's word saves both."—*Speaker's Com.*

"Not surrender unpopular truths to popular fallacies."—*Wordsworth.*

"Not concede to the vices of men nor cherish their fancies, but constrain them to undertake the yoke of God. The truth of God ought not to bend to the will of men; for God changes not, neither does His word."—*Calvin.*

Vers. 19, 20. *Theme:* THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

We have here God's answer to the prophet's prayer. Jeremiah is not allowed to retire from the work, either because of its offensiveness to the people, or because it grieved him to be a man of strife among them. He is promised divine assistance and protection in those great undertakings to which he is appointed. Concerning the ministry of the word, we are here reminded that it is—

I. A ministry of divine authority. "Thou shalt stand before Me."

II. A ministry of divine revelations. "Thou shalt be as My mouth."

III. A ministry of wise discrimination. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile."

IV. A ministry often opposed by those to whom it is sent. "And they shall fight against thee."

V. A ministry requiring much courage. "I will make thee . . . a fenced and brazen wall."

VI. A ministry which will be divinely vindicated. "I am with thee, to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord."

VII. A ministry which lifts up Christ as the Saviour of men. "As Moses lifted up," &c. "I, if I be lifted up," &c. "We preach Christ crucified," &c.—*W. Whale.*

Ver. 20. *Theme:* IMPREGNABLE SECURITY IN JEHOVAH'S SERVICE.

"I will make thee a fenced brazen wall," &c. This is a repetition of the promise made by Jehovah to Jeremiah

at the outset of his prophetic career (ch. i. 18, 19). Jeremiah may confidently rely on protection from on high, and God-given fortitude, if he will maintain fidelity in his messages and witness for righteousness among a depraved and hostile people.

God's address of encouragement meets the faltering prophet with definite promises and hopeful statements, and affirms the four facts :—

I. Invincible courage supernaturally supplied.

1. *Its source.* "I will make thee." No self-reliance, therefore; nor self-despair.

2. *Its scope.* "Unto this people." It must be *shown*, and shown in *scenes* definitely indicated.

3. *Its stability.* "A fenced brazen wall." Proof against all assaults; inflexible, immovable.

> "Hic *murus aheneus* esto,
> Nil conscire sibi, nulla, pallescere culpâ."
> —*Horat.* 1 *Epis.* i. 60.

II. Determined hostility from the wicked. "They shall fight against thee."

Not passive unconcern; not airy incredulity; not frank and friendly remonstrance; but defiant antagonism, and angry abuse.

1. *Resistance of his messages.*

2. *Resentment against him personally.*

3. *Rebellion against the God he served.*

Jeremiah must, therefore, lay himself out for vigorous and valorous warfare; get rid of sentimental fears, and quit himself like a stalwart warrior for God's cause and glory!

III. Supremacy guaranteed over antagonists. "They shall not prevail against thee."

1. *There would be actual encounter.* A struggle *man* to *man*. This is the true idea of a faithful ministry.

2. *There would be need of self-defence.* Assailants would intend to prevail against the prophet; to defeat him in argument; to destroy his faith in God; and to silence his messages amid derision. Jeremiah would need to look to himself and defend his own fidelity.

3. *There would be a triumphant issue.* Jeremiah should "prevail." Whom God makes *invincible* He also makes *victorious*. Not only successful defence against attack, but supremacy over assailants.

IV. Personally guarded by Jehovah Himself.

1. *God's personal protection.* It is a precious promise that "He will give His angels charge," &c., also that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous," &c., also that "as thy day is so shall thy strength be." But better far this—"I will be with thee."

2. *God's sure protection.* "To *save* thee"—preservation from his enemies; "to *deliver* thee"—rescue from the wiles and assaults.

The idea of *rescue*, should the prophet become *entangled by their sophistries* or *captured by force*, is more fully expressed in ver. 21: "I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked (malignant), and I will redeem thee out of the hand (from the grasp) of the terrible." So that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Ver. 20. *Theme:* GOD'S AMBASSADOR FORTIFIED. "I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall," &c.

I. God's qualification of an overseer of His Church.

The metaphor of a call implies:

1. Courage.
2. Integrity (innocence, therefore).
3. Authority.

II. The opposition a church overseer will meet with.

"They shall fight against thee:"

1. By seditious preaching and praying.
2. By railing and libels.
3. By (possibly) open force.

III. The issue and success of such opposition.

"They shall not prevail."—*South.*

Ver. 21. *Theme:* GOD'S PERFECT SALVATION. "And I will deliver and redeem thee."

The prophet's loneliness and the opposition of the people burdened his spirit. Jehovah's assurances must have afforded precious consolations and confidence to him. The promised presence and interposing power of God.

I. Alarming perils. "The hand of the *wicked;* the hand of the *terrible.*"

Implying the *moral quality* which distinguishes our spiritual foes, and the *fierce malignity* with which they plot our ruin.

Perils to *character*, to *peace*, to *security in God*, to the *soul itself.*

II. A mighty Saviour. "I will deliver; I will redeem."

Greater than our foes. Equal to all exigencies. No one else can save; it is His work. Employed in His service, He will undertake our defence and deliverance. Saved by Him. Safe in Him.

III. Complete redemption. "To deliver; to redeem."

Salvation has various forms: from perils of this world, from taint of sin, from spiritual foes, from personal fears and faults, from terror of death, &c.

Redemption by *price;* deliverance by *power.*

IV. Unfailing certainty. "I *will;* I *will.*"

Expresses *determination, earnestness, love, certainty.*

"I will fear no evil, for *Thou art with me.*"

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER XV.

Topic: PRAYER FOR A PEOPLE UNAVAILING. (Ver. 1).

Moses and Samuel held responsible offices, and were faithful to their trusts. With their piety as men, and fidelity as servants, God was well pleased. If any two men could have prevailed with God on behalf of a rebellious people, these could. But the conduct of the people had alienated His mind from them. Thus—

i. There *may be complete alienation of God* from sinful men. "My mind could not be towards this people."

ii. There *is a limit to the Divine forbearance* towards defiant souls. "He will not always chide," though He chides again and again; neither will He keep back His anger for ever. Cast them out of My sight. Then no prayers, even from the best of men and the most eminent servants of God, can arrest the judgment.

I. Manifestly the prayers of good men do avail much. Instances prove that it is an established law for prayers, by the Moses and Samuels who stand before the Lord, to prevail.

II. While the power of prayer is obvious, there is no merit in prayer nor in him who offers it.

1. *Prayer supposes the absence of all claim*, for what a man can claim he need not pray for.

2. *Prayer can only make its appeal to mercy*, and mercy, being purely sovereign, can heed or refuse the appeal according to its pleasure. Had mercy refused every prayer, justice would have received no violation.

III. God's right to refuse to answer prayers is beyond all challenge.

1. His declaration: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," &c., *asserts His right* to withhold or bestow grace according to His sovereign will.

2. This right involves the right *to hear or not to hear* the prayers of suppliants, be those suppliants Moses and Samuels, or publicans and sinners.

3. If God were under obligation to hear prayer and bestow mercy, *mercy would be no longer mercy, and grace would be no longer grace.* Obligation is justice, and not mercy; duty, and not grace.

IV. All our appeals for mercy and grace must be based on the Atoning Sacrifice.

1. Every act of mercy *flows to us through the righteousness of Christ*, the only channel of mercy from God to man.

2. Even when our appeals are based on the sacrifice of Christ, *they must be left to the sovereignty of Divine mercy* to answer or not to answer.

3. If we rightly recognised this sovereignty of Divine mercy, our *prayers would*

be more humbly presented and answers would kindle a loftier praise, exclaiming, "Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer nor His mercy from me!"

V. Prayer is music in the ears of God. The sounds of earnest prayer enter into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth, and delight Him more than ten thousand harpers harping with their harps. The prayer of the *penitent* gives joy to all the hosts of heaven, and the prayers of *saints*, our Moses' and Samuels, give pleasure to the gracious God even when—for wise and judicial reasons—He cannot grant their requests. Whether answered or unanswered, "the prayer of the upright is His delight."—Arranged from "*Morning and Evening Walks with the Prophet Jeremiah.*"

Topic: MEN OF PROGRESS, MEN OF STRIFE. (Ver. 10).

Jeremiah called of God to an essential but unpopular work. He is judged to be a fault-finding, quarrelsome person, whereas he is really a sympathetic friend. They hear his outspoken denunciations against sin, and the utterance by him of divine threatenings; but they do not hear his prayers for them, or know the groanings of his spirit. He is misjudged. He is lonely. He would rather have been born to a quiet life, and wishes God would have chosen some one else to the prophetic work.

Jeremiah is typical of public men who have been the reformers of society, the leaders of thought, and often the martyrs of some great movement. We may note some reasons why such persons appear to be men of strife:—

I. Because of noncompliance with popular sins. Jeremiah asserted his freedom from prevailing evils. Always some interested in doing wrong, and maintaining evils among the people. Those who will not conform, especially such as speak and labour against sin, are considered men of strife—Micaiah, Elijah, John Baptist, Jesus, and many others.

II. Because they are in advance of the age. They look at all matters from a more elevated standpoint, and seek to bring the people up to their level. Paul was in advance of the craftsmen of Ephesus. Luther was in advance of the church of Rome, as Wicliffe before him had been. Copernicus and Galileo, Huss and Wesley, not to mention others in all departments, were pioneers of progress, and were in advance of their fellows.

III. Because they were earnest and energetic men. Some can be indifferent; true souls cannot be. Cannot agree to leave things alone, and let every one go his own way. Must bear testimony for God and truth. Many now would call Noah, Elijah, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, visionaries, enthusiasts, madmen, as indeed they often speak of those who have their spirit.

IV. Because all good work causes strife. Evil has to be *conquered*, the devil has to be *cast out*. No curse will peaceably give place to a blessing. In the heart, and in the world, it must be conflict. Christ came to give peace to the trustful heart, but not to bring peace *immediately* on earth. In Bethlehem, in Nazareth, in Capernaum, in Jerusalem, He made conflict. Every great work has its stage of martyrdom, its age of chivalry, before its triumph;—its Egypt and wilderness before its Canaan,—its manger, baptism, wilderness trial, Gethsemane, and cross, before it sits on the throne waiting till its foes be made its footstool.

V. Because the field of battle is the path of glory. "We must fight if we would reign." *The promise* is "to him that overcometh." *Salvation* is finally for "him that endureth to the end." *The exhortation* is not only to repent and believe, but to "fight the good fight of faith." *The provision* is for the warrior; he who would be a saint, must be a soldier. The martyrs of one age are the heroes of the next. Prophets, apostles, martyrs, missionaries, and reformers have all been men of war. We honour them for the battles they fought and the victories they won. The record of their lives appeals to us—

"Hark! 'tis a marshal sound,
To arms, ye saints, to arms,
Your foes are gathering round,
And peace has lost its charms.
Prepare the helmet, sword, and shield,
The trumpet calls you to the field."

—*W. Whale.*

Topic: THE POWER OF REBUKE. (Vers. 19, 20.)

"If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth; and I will make thee unto the people a fenced brazen wall."

It is by the gracious word of Divine mercy that the hearts of men are to be subdued.

The human mind is found to be influenced far more by hope and tenderness, than by terror and rebuke.

I. The Christian ministry includes also an office of commination. If the messengers of heaven, when among the outcasts of mankind, who, *in ignorance of God, have gone astray from virtue*, speak much more of virtue than of wrath; when they stand among those who, *being well informed in matters of religion, use the grace of the Gospel to palliate their vices*, the messages of wrath must be most upon their lips.

II. The tendency of the Christian ministry is to move down from its remedial functions to become an office of delectation.

1. Furnishing *intellectual* entertainment; uttering, as matters of gorgeous eloquence, the appalling verities of eternal justice. Nature forbids such an incongruity, and the renovating Spirit refuses to yield the energy of His power to the sway of a mere minister of public recreation.

2. Affording *spiritual* entertainment; by exhibiting the conceits and ingenuities of mystic exposition; by painting in high colours the honours and privileges of the believer, and allowing professors of all sorts to appropriate the fulsome description; or by pealing out thunders of wrath against distant adversaries, rather than at the impure, unjust, rapacious, and malicious who fill the pews around him. This latter direct method might turn the whole tide of his popularity!

III. It behoves preachers to beware of the indurating effect of accustomed phrases and forms of words. Such conventional phrases conceal from the mind the ideas they should convey; hence preachers should continually endeavour to break up the mental incrustations which are always spreading themselves over the sensitive surface of the soul. This is most especially necessary in reference to matters wherein the drowsy formalities of language tend directly to augment the stupefying influence that belongs to all vicious indulgences. A mind, already rendered callous by sensuality, receives every week a new, and again a new insensibility from the heavy monotonies of the pulpit.

IV. It is a pressing duty of the minister of religion to maintain, in vigour, the spirit he needs as the reprover of sin and the guardian of virtue. It is easy to teach the articles of belief, to illustrate the branches of Christian ethics, to proclaim the Divine mercy, to meet and assuage the fears of the feeble and sorrows of the afflicted. But to keep in full activity the *power of rebuke*, demands rare qualities. It is fruitless to search aside for substitutes for these qualities. The preacher may avail himself of *abstract demonstration* respecting the unalterable rigour of the Divine government, to prove that the Supreme Ruler of the moral system can never pass over transgression, but must needs exact the appointed penalty from either the transgressor or his substitute. The erudite argument, for any substantial effect it will produce, might as well have related to the planets.

Or he may adopt the *devices of eloquence;* turning descriptive, pathetic, indignant. Yet while the walls ring with these sounds of alarm, the covetous man continues counting his gold, the eye of the vain and prurient is darting from object to object of illicit attraction, &c.

But *to speak efficaciously* of the holiness and justice of the Almighty God, and of its future consequences; to speak in modesty, tenderness, and power, of the approaching doom of the impenitent, *must be left to those whose spirits have had much communion with the dread Majesty on high.* On these topics ordinary preachers are most at fault; they are not themselves in spiritual fitness and equipment for their duty of rebuke and testimony of judgment.

V. There are three indispensable qualifications for the vigorous exercise of the Christian minister for this power of rebuke.

1. Such *a conviction of the truth of Christianity* as shall render him proof against assaults from within and from without. The quarrel of the world with Christianity comes to its issue upon the doctrine of future retribution. Meditating upon the scenes of joy which the Gospel spreads before us, we are not perplexed by discordant doubts; for joy and hope are emotions indigenous to the human mind. But the same law which makes joy and hope spontaneous, unsuspectingly impels us to doubt when we set our foot upon the region which sin has replenished with terrors. Fatal to his influence as a refuter of sin must be a lurking scepticism in the preacher's breast. The infection of his own doubts will pass into the heart of the hearer, and will serve to harden each transgressor in his impenitence.

2. A *resolute loyalty to the divine administration* will be equally needful. It rests itself upon the assurance, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" It takes its force from genuine piety and affection to truth. It is the same spirit that led the royal poet to utter his persuasion, "I know, O Lord, that all Thy judgments are right;" and moved Paul with a similar force of healthy piety to exclaim, "Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar." Such loyalty will break through the mazes of much sophistry, will support the servant of God when assailed by more fallacies than he can at the moment refute, and enable him to cleave under all obloquies and embarrassments to what he inwardly and firmly knows must in the end prove itself the better cause.

3. Not less necessary to the minister of truth is *an unaffected and sensitive compassion towards his fellow-men*, and a compassion of that efficient kind which nothing has ever produced but the Gospel. The servant of Heaven can effect his commission only as he gains access to the human heart; and there is no other path of access but that of love. Men, rather than angels, are sent to preach repentance, that the promulgation of mercy may always be heard in tones of tenderness and humiliation. The end of a reproof is mercy. If there were no redemption at hand, it were idle or cruel to talk of judgment.—*Isaac Taylor, Saturday Evening*, xv.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XV.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. INTERCESSORY PRAYER. "I ought to study Christ as an intercessor. He prayed most for Peter, who was most to be tempted."—*M'Cheyne.*

"Sandalphon stands listening breathless
To sounds that ascend from below;—

"From the spirits on earth that adore,
From the souls that entreat and implore
In the fervour and passion of prayer;
From the hearts that are broken with losses,
And weary with dragging the crosses
Too heavy for mortals to bear.

"And he gathers the prayers as he stands,
And they change into flowers in his hands,
Into garlands of purple and red;
And beneath the great arch of the portal,
Through the streets of the city immortal,
Is wafted the fragrance they shed."
—"*Legend of the Angel of Prayer.*"
—*Longfellow.*

LIMITS TO PRAYER.

"If by prayer
Incessant I could hope to change the will
Of Him who all things can, I would not cease
To weary Him with my assiduous cries.
But prayer against His absolute decree
No more avails than breath against the wind,
Blows stifling back on him that breathes it forth:
Therefore to His great bidding I submit."
—*Milton's "Paradise Lost."*

"What is the limit of our prayer? This: 'Not my will but Thine be done!' Is that a limit? Why, that is glorious liberty! Not my will but Thine,—not

a little will but a great will,—not my thought but Thine,—not my love but Thine' Is it a limit? It is the lark rising from its field-nest with the boundless liberty of the firmament. Truly we do not limit ourselves when we exchange the creature for the Creator."—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Ver. 2. SCORNFUL INCREDULITY. "Rest thee well assured, O scorner! that thy laughs cannot alter truth, thy jests cannot avert thine inevitable doom. Though in thy hardihood thou shouldst make a league with death, and sign a covenant with hell, yet swift justice shall overtake thee, and strong vengeance strike thee low. In vain dost thou jeer and mock, for eternal verities are mightier than thy sophistries; nor can thy smart sayings alter the divine truth of a single word of this volume of Revelation. Oh! why dost thou quarrel with thy best friend, and ill-treat thy only refuge?"—*Spurgeon.*

Ver. 4. PARENTAGE. "The account that begins to be incurred when parents rejoice because a child is born to them, is the most solemn account that ever is incurred aside of one's own individual duty towards God. I do not mean that all the misconduct and evil-endings of the child are to come back upon the parent, and that there is to be in the child no free will, so that no individual account can belong to him. For if a parent has cleansed his skirts of his children, the guilt of their sins will rest on their heads, and not on his. But unless the parent can show that the child's misconduct and wreck of eternity are not attributable to any fault of his, the weight of the child's condemnation will be divided." —*H. W. Beecher.*

"The last thing forgotten in all the recklessness of dissolute profligacy is the prayer or hymn taught by a mother's lips or uttered at a father's knee; and where there seems to have been any pains bestowed even by one parent to train up a child aright, there is generally more than ordinary ground for hope." —*The Experience of a Prison Chaplain.*

Ver. 5. LOST TO PITY.

"None pities him that's in the snare,
And, warned before, would not beware."
—*Herick.*

Ver. 8. LIFE'S NOONTIDE.

"O life, how pleasant is thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning!
Cold, pausing Caution's lessons scorning,
We frisk away,
Like schoolboys at the expected warning,
To joy and play." —*Burns.*

"For ah! my heart, how very soon
The glittering dreams of youth are past;
And long before it reach its noon,
The sun of life is overcast." —*Moore.*

"What is youth? A dancing billow,
Winds behind, and rocks before!"
—*Wordsworth.*

"Live, that thy young and glowing breast
Can think of death without a sigh,
And be assured that life is best
Which finds us least afraid to die."
—*Eliza Cook.*

Ver. 9. EARLY DEATH. "What is this voice to us?" says Bonar of the early death of M'Cheyne. "Only this much we can clearly see, that nothing was more fitted to leave his character and example impressed on our remembrance for ever than his early death. There might be envy while he lived; there is none now. There might have been some of the youthful attractiveness of his graces lost had he lived many years; this cannot be impaired now. It seems as if the Lord had struck the flower from the stem ere any of the colours had lost their bright hues or any leaf its fragrance."

It is remarkable yet mysterious how many of God's choicest servants have been removed so early. Look over this list:—H. Kirke White (at 21), Andrew Gray (21), John Janeway (23), Patrick Hamilton (24), R. M. M'Cheyne (29), Captain Hedley Vicars (29), David Brainerd (30), H. W. Fox (30), Felix Neff (31), J. H. Forsyth (32), H. Martyn (32), Toplady (35), W. Archer Butler (35).

Ver. 10. A TROUBLED MINISTRY. "Exposed to criticisms and interferences of the vulgarest and coarsest kind. One man will ask how it is that so few additions are made to the Church? Another will inquire how it is that the collections have fallen off? A third will profess to lament that the seats were better let in former years. A fourth will intimate that we must have preach-

ing which is abreast of the times. The minister often listens to these things with a justly angry spirit, oftener still with a heavy or aching heart; but what can he do? Shall he answer a fool according to his folly? This is exactly what the fool would like above everything. Shall he restrain himself and swallow his grief? He does so; but such discipline often brings with it discouragement and sadness,—sometimes almost despair."—*Parker.*

Ver. 12. BE NOT DISCOURAGED. "Some of the greatest works that were ever performed by Christian people were not immediate in their results. You know the story of the removal of old St. Paul's by Sir Christopher Wren. A very massive piece of masonry had to be broken down, and the task, by pick and shovel, would have been a very tedious one, so the great architect prepared a battering-ram for its removal, and a large number of workmen were directed to strike with force against the wall with the ram. After several hours of labour, the wall, to all appearances, stood fast and firm. Their many strokes had been apparently lost, but the architect knew that they were gradually communicating motion to the wall, creating an agitation throughout the whole of it, and that, by and by, when they had continued long enough, the entire mass would come down beneath a single stroke. The workmen, no doubt, attributed the result to the one crowning concussion, but their master knew that their previous strokes had only culminated in that one tremendous blow, and that all the non-resultant work had been necessary to prepare for the stroke which achieved the purpose."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

EVIL SHALL NOT PREVAIL.—"In the dark ages the enemy thought he had destroyed the Church, but life came into the monk in his cell, and Luther shook the world. The Church in England fell into a deadly slumber in the days of Whitfield and Wesley; but she was not dead, and therefore a time of awakening came. The flame burned low, but the heavenly fire still lingered among the ashes, and only needed the Holy Spirit to blow upon it, and cause a hallowed conflagration. Six young men in Oxford were found guilty of meeting to pray: their offence was contagious, and soon there sprang up hundreds glorying in the same blessed crime. Earnest servants of the living God were forthcoming, and no man knew whence they came; like the buds and blossoms which come forth at the bidding of spring, a people made willing in the day of God's power came forward at once. Seeing that there is life in the Church of God, you can never calculate what will happen within its bounds to-morrow; for life is an unaccountable thing, and scorns the laws which bind the formal and inanimate. The statues in St. Paul's Cathedral stand fixed on their pedestals, and the renowned dead in Westminster Abbey never raise a riot; but who can tell what the living may next conceive or attempt? They burnt the Gospel out in Spain, did they not? And in the Low Countries they erased the memory thereof. How is it now? Has not Spain achieved her liberty at a blow? Is not also Belgium free to the preacher of the Word? Not even Italy or Rome itself is safe against the obnoxious heretic. Everywhere the Gospel penetrates. Even the earth helps the woman, and swallows up the flood which the dragon casts out of his mouth to drown the man-child: political rulers restrain the violence of those who otherwise would slay the saints in one general massacre."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Ver. 15. ON BEING REMEMBERED. See Bonar's hymn, "*The Everlasting Memorial.*"

"I need not be missed if my life has been bearing
(As its summer and autumn moved silently on)
Its flower and its fruit: I shall still be remembered—
Yes, but remembered by what I have done."

Ver. 16. ENJOYING GOD'S WORD. "What do I not owe to the Lord," writes Henry Martyn, "for permitting me to take part in the translation of His Word? Never did I see such wonders, and wisdom, and love in the blessed Book, as since I have been obliged to study every expression: and

It is a delightful reflection, that death cannot deprive us of the pleasure of studying its mysteries."

Shortly before his death, Dr. Buchanan, giving to a friend some details of his laborious revisions of his Syriac Testament, suddenly stopped and burst into tears. On recovering himself, he said, "I am not ill, but I was completely overcome with the recollection of the delight which I have enjoyed in this exercise. At first I was disposed to shrink from the task as irksome, and apprehended that I should find even the Scriptures pall by the frequency of this critical examination. But, so far from it, every fresh perusal seemed to throw fresh light on the Word of God, and to convey additional joy and consolation to my mind."

APPROPRIATING GOD'S WORD. "Have you an ear to hear Gospel truth as the voice of the Infinite God addressed to your own soul? The Dutch farmers at the Cape, at no very distant period, considered the Hottentots around them to be little better than beasts, quite incapable of anything beyond mere eating, drinking, stealing, and lying. After our missionaries had laboured among the natives for a time, one of them was found reading the Bible by the roadside. The Dutchman inquired of him, 'What book are you reading?' 'The Bible.' 'The Bible! Why, that book was never intended for *you*.' 'Indeed it was,' said the black man, 'for I see my name here.' 'Your name! where?' cried the farmer. 'Show it to me.' 'There,' said the Hottentot, putting his finger on the word '*sinners*.' 'That's my name; I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came to save me.' It were well, indeed, if men would but read the Bible, saying, 'In this volume the great God condescends to speak to me."—*Spurgeon.*

CHAPTER XVI

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. Chapters xvi. and xvii. form one prophecy. The taunt in chap. xvii. 15 shows that this message from God was delivered before the capture of Jerusalem, which occurred at the close of Jehoiakim's career. Jehoiakim was slain in the eleventh year of his reign, *i.e.*, in common chronology, B.C. 597, or in Assyrian chronology, B.C. 578. There are allusions in the prophecy which lead to the conclusion that it was delivered during this reign; and we may conjecture it to be a few years before its end.

2. Contemporary Scriptures; 3. National Affairs; and 4. Contemporary History; cf. *Notes* in chapters vii., x., and xi. 5. Geographical References—none. 6. Personal Allusions—none. 7. Natural History—none.

8. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 6. "*Nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them.*" Among the Jews, as among almost all ancient nations, it was customary to lacerate themselves, and to make bald a patch on the front of their heads, as signs of excessive grief. This had been prohibited the Jews by Divine law (Lev. xix. 28; xxi. 5; Deut. xiv. i.), yet seemed still to be a common practice (chaps. vii. 29; xli. 5; Isa. xxii. 12; Ezek. vii. 18; Amos viii. 10; Micah i. 16). Ver. 7. "*Tear themselves*" (see MARGIN)—"*Break bread:*" the bereaved having fasted for a while, their friends came and urged food upon them (2 Sam. i. 12; iii. 35; xii. 16, 17); food was also distributed to the mourners at the funeral (Ezek. xxiv. 17; Hos. ix. 4). Ver. 16. "*Many fishers: many hunters.*" Fishers were wont to use drag-nets, which swept the waters and captured all the fish; so hunters would surround a large space with beaters and nets, and drive every creature forward into some enclosed spot for capture or destruction. "Literally understood, the 'fishers' are the main armies, who, in the towns and fortresses, capture the people in crowds as in a net; while the 'hunters' are the light-armed troops, who pursue the fugitives over the whole country, and drive them out of their hiding-places with an eager pleasure as hunters track out their game (comp. Amos iv. 2; Hab. i. 15)."—*Speaker's Com.*

9. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 4. "*Grievous deaths:*" lit., *deaths of diseases, i.e.*, deaths by those manifold diseases which accompany war. The word תַּחֲלֻאִים, here rendered *grievous*, is the same as occurs in chap. xiv. 18 [see *Lit. Crit. in loc.*], *tortures* of famine.

Ver. 5. "*House of mourning:*" בֵּית מַרְזֵחַ. In Amos vi. 7 (the only other occurrence of this word in Scripture), מַרְזֵחַ is rendered *banquet*. Doubtless the root רָזַח means a loud *cry*; in this verse it is the shriek of grief; in Amos, the shout of jubilation. "Enter not into the house of *shouting*. The LXX. give the rendering, "Enter not into their bacchanalian assembly" (*θιασον*); Vulgate and Targum have *feast*; Jerome, *domus convivii.*

Ver. 7. "*Neither shall tear for them:*" פּוּס is used interchangeably by Jeremiah for פָּרַשׂ (Lam. iv. 4); here eliptically for פּוּס לֶחֶם, to break bread, *frangere*.

Ver. 12. "*Imagination:*" stubbornness (comp. iii. 17; ix. 11–15).

Ver. 13. "*There shall ye serve other gods, where I will not,*" *&c.* The form of the sentence is ironical: there *ye may* serve other gods night and day, *since I will show you no favour.*

Ver. 14. "*Therefore, behold:*" לכן should be rendered *nevertheless*, not "therefore." *Blayney* gives, *After this.*

Ver. 18. "*And first:*" וְרִאשֹׁנָה, Henderson says, is used adverbially, and gives it as *previously, i.e., before God restores them*, as stated in ver. 14. Venema agrees with this: And I will first recompense doubly their iniquity; *i.e.*, before I restore them. Calvin, rendering the word *formerly—from the beginning*, explains thus: God would collect together all the iniquities which had been long buried, so as to include fathers and children in the punishment thereof. Jerome, Hitzig, Ewald, Keil, and Umbriet accord with Henderson and Venema.

"*Carcases of their detestable things:*" LXX. = θνησιμαίοις, "the dead bodies of their abominations;" *Vulgate*, "the carrions of their idols;" *Syriac*, "the sacrifices of their idols;" *Blayney*, "the vileness of their odious practices;" *Keil*, "the carcases of their detestables"—which may refer either to "their lifeless and hateful idols" (Dr. Payne Smith), or "victims offered to idols" (Rosenm.).

HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XVI.

Sections 1–9. Impending national desolations warn from contracting social relationships.
" 10–13. Apostasy punished with exile.
" 14–21. Benignant promises of future restoration and conversion.

Vers. 1–9. Impending Desolations warn from Contracting Social Relationships.

Near calamities! With death and woe approaching, it was no time for social alliances and family life. Happy they who were not parents, for they would be spared anguish over offspring. Dark the day for those who had loved ones, for destruction would seize those whom they cherished. They who were usually condoled with because of family loneliness would now be congratulated that they had none to love, none therefore over whom to grieve.

i. Home life requires, in order to its enjoyment, *inward serenity* and *external security.*

ii. Family relationships *multiply our sorrows in times of adversity* and experiences of calamity.

iii. Without a *prospect of affording happiness, marriage* and the creation of a home are *inexcusable.* (See *Addenda:* Marriage.)

Thus the topics of the section suggest:—

I. Domestic alliances discouraged.—Ver. 2. With Jeremiah the case was special. The impending disasters emphatically forbade him to entail on himself domestic responsibilities and claims. If a man "provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." And his very calling in such adverse and calamitous times would render it impossible for him to fulfil a husband's or a parent's part.

1. We should *have regard to the future* in forming home relationships, and estimate contingencies.

2. We should endeavour, *by caution and frugality, to screen our loved ones* from impending distress.

3. We should realise *how seriously the welfare and happiness of the entire household depends upon our conduct.*

II. Family desolations depicted.—Vers. 3, 4. A piteous prospect! Whole families destroyed (ver. 3). Agonising deaths shall overtake them (ver. 4). None shall perform the offices of lamentation or sepulture (ver. 5).

The general lessons are these:—

1. How *utterly desolating* may be the calamities which shall despoil peaceful and pleasant homes!

2. How all the *social respect and personal affection* which prosperous times ensured us may fail us in evil days!

3. How *ruthless are the destructions* of the enemy! Nothing spared: not beautiful childhood, nor reverend age!

III. Unmerited pity prohibited.—Vers. 5–8.

1. Appalling ruin *naturally arouses us* to "lament and bemoan."

2. Miseries *entailed by sin should be discriminated* from unprovoked calamities.

3. Amid the destruction of *God's enemies*, His people must remember that He doeth all things well, and not allow a sentimental pity to overrule their recognition of righteous judgment.

4. God's servants should *shun any festive companionships* with those whose iniquities invoke His anger (ver. 8).

IV. Divine justice explained.—Vers. 5 and 9. The "grievous deaths" (ver. 4) and the social desolations will not be accidental.

1. The impending woes will be *God's righteous visitation* (ver. 9).

2. *Forewarned by the prophet*, the victims of nearing ruin paid no heed (ver. 10)

3. The *withdrawal of God's mercy* will expose them to the destroyer (ver. 5). "I have taken away My peace from this people, saith the Lord." His gracious security had ensured their serenity even amid all their sins thus far; but the hour of abandonment comes, and then "destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace" will be lost for ever.

Vers. 10–13. Apostasy Punished with Exile.

I. Rebels affecting ignorance of their wrong.—Ver. 10.

II. Iniquity brought home to the transgressors.—Vers. 11, 12.

III. Banishment the penalty of apostates.—Ver. 13.

Vers. 14–21. Benignant Promises of Future Restoration and Conversion.

The verses contain the following suggestions:—

I. God's former miraculous acts of grace recounted.—Ver. 14. That is the background with which the following promise is brought into comparison.

II. God's former miraculous acts of grace surpassed.—Vers. 14, 15. Rescued from a more powerful foe, and more hopeless dispersions.

III. Effective ministries of restoration depicted.—Ver. 16. (See preliminary note under *Manners and Customs* on this verse.)

IV. Complete recovery of the scattered ones assured.—Ver. 16. None overlooked. Found in unlikely places. Brought from hiding-places safely home.

V. Omniscience fails not in minutest supervision.—Ver. 17. *Has seen* their "iniquities" in their own land. *Will see* their "ways" when scattered over all lands. [Here, however, the word "ways" refers not to the ways of flight, but their course of action.]

VI. Heavy chastisements to precede restoration.—Ver. 18. Grievous have been their apostate deeds; dishonouring God, and defying His holy land.

VII. Humanity returning to the true and living God.—Ver. 19. The prophet, *by experience, knew* God. The nations would in the end discover their need of Him, and seek the Lord.

VIII. Refuges of lies gladly renounced.—Vers. 19, 20. In ignorance many follow "vanities;" often fall into the habits of their "fathers." *Idolatry will disprove itself* (ver. 20).

IX. Jehovah realised as Israel's blessed hope.—Ver. 21.

1. A *grand crisis of Divine manifestation.* "I will *this once* cause them to know *My hand and My might.*"

2. A manifestation in which they shall *recognise their God.* "They shall know that My name is Jehovah." (Comp. Isa. xxv. 9.) "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is *the Lord,*" &c.

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* JEREMIAH CALLED BY ACTIONS TO ATTEST HIS PREDICTIONS.

1. He had complained that *God's word through him seemed to fail,* because fulfilment was deferred (chap. xv. 18).

2. He is now commanded to *show his own faith in his messages* by abstaining from social alliances.

3. He would *by such conduct confirm his words* and awaken serious expectancy among his people.

Actions preach where words are impotent. "For this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none . . . for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Comments—

Jeremiah's prohibition to marry has this *application:* "Let it not be that thy children charge thee as thou hast charged thy mother, chap. xv. 10."—*Naegelsbach.*

And these *meanings:*

"By remaining in a single state, Jeremiah was to be a symbol of the then future condition of his countrymen (comp. Ezek. xxiv. 15–27)."—*Henderson.*

"It was to show that the people were wholly given up to destruction; and the nearing desolation and solitude of the whole land. Celibacy is not here commended."—*Calvin.*

Vers. 2–4. *Theme:* LIMITATIONS OF MARRIAGE.

Generally speaking, "it is not good for man to be alone." God has made woman to be his companion and helpmeet. Generally speaking also, "children are an heritage of the Lord" (Ps. cxxvii. 3–5.) But there are some exceptions to the rule, and great discretion is needed even within the limits of the divine precept, else man may not have a helpmeet, nor will children be to him a comfort. Marriage may become a calamity to husband, wife, and children under some circumstances. It is not always necessary to show that a marriage, or any other act, is *unlawful;* for, though lawful, it may yet be inexpedient owing to the conditions of life, such as sickness, poverty, or public calamity. Let the peculiar circumstances pass away, and then that which is lawful may not be inexpedient.

I. **Marriage may be inexpedient owing to a call to some peculiar work.** It would appear that others were not forbidden to marry, but *only the prophet.* He was commissioned to a hazardous undertaking, and the cares of a family would have brought considerations which might not have been helpful to him in the work.

We can well imagine that Micaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, John Baptist, Paul, and such like men, might find it best to be free from the claims of a wife and family. *Of course they had to sacrifice the comforts of home.*

It would be difficult to imagine how our Lord could have carried out His work for us had He been married, and that not because there was any reason in Him why it would have been unlawful, but because He could not be entangled by any secondary considerations.

Paul gives advice most difficult to follow when he asks that those who have wives be as though they had none. This needs much grace and great wisdom to do aright.

Many workers for Christ, as missionaries, and those who have undertaken difficult tasks, have denied themselves the comforts of companionship, and the luxuries of home, "for His name's sake." This is not monastic celibacy, but divine singleness of eye and heart to one all-absorbing pursuit.

II. **Marriage may be inexpedient owing to some peculiar phase in a nation's history.** Jerusalem was under

divine threatening, and great calamities were about to come upon her; it was kindness to Jeremiah to advise and even to command that he should not involve others more than might be. So in times of epidemic, famine, siege of cities, or any great public misfortune, it may be a duty to limit ourselves in any indulgence or luxury, however lawful in itself, or justifiable under other circumstances.

We recognise the mercy of God in thus preventing much misery to any offspring which might have resulted from such a marriage. They would, according to the text, have been born to an inheritance of misery and ruin. God's servants desire for their children a happy and useful life. There will be enough of sorrow taking life even at its best, but oh the grief of being born to almost necessary and unavoidable ruin!

III. Marriage may be inexpedient owing to some peculiar spiritual conditions. It was from spiritual causes that the troubles came upon Jerusalem.

It was for spiritual, as well as natural, reasons that God gave the command to Jeremiah.

Much of the sorrow of life arises from disregard to spiritual conditions as qualifications for marriage. There is often the marriage of the body when there is no real union of the soul.

Such marriages are not only inexpedient, but unscriptural.

The consequences to children, to society, and to the Church of Christ are very serious indeed.

The Scripture gives great liberty, but it also prescribes some rule. We are at liberty to be married to whom we will "only in the Lord."

If we rightly understand the precept, it indicates God's desire for our comforts, and His consequent direction as to the only way it can be realised.

Marry only to those who love God.

Marry only when you can confer real happiness on the object of your affection.

Marry only to those who will not impede your spiritual progress, or hinder your efforts to serve the Lord and His Church.—W. Whale.

See *Addenda:* MARRIAGE.

Comments—

Ver. 4. "*They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried,*" &c.

"Similarly in the plagues of Athens and London, the greatness of the general misery crushed out the gentler sympathies of human nature." (Comp. Thuc. ii. 52.)—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

Ver. 5. *Theme:* SIN EXCLUDES FROM SYMPATHY AND SORROW. "Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people, saith the Lord, even lovingkindness and mercies."

Indicate how—

I. Sin brings heavy woes upon transgressors.

1. *The loss of God's peace.* "Taken away My peace." Therefore there is no peace to the wicked.

2. *The alienation of Providential favours.* "Even lovingkindness and mercies." Godly lives are girded about by heavenly ministries, and enriched with daily "blessings of goodness."

3. *The accumulation of calamities and sorrows.* So that there is occasion to "lament and bemoan." All men have trouble, are "born to trouble"; but the godly "hides himself in the sacred place of the Most High," and finds "Everlasting arms underneath him" in his day of grief. But the wicked are comfortless in their miseries. No "consolations wherewith God comforts us in any sorrow" alleviate the transgressor's desolations and distresses. Nor has the sinner any heavenly outlook which brightens his present gloom.

II. Sin, if prolonged, necessitates Divine abandonment.

1. *God is slow in withdrawing His grace.* And indeed the Intercessor pleads, "Let be this year also."

2. *Yet slighted patience leads to withdrawal of peace.* Trifling with God's "lovingkindness and mercies" compels Him at last to "take away His peace" and leave the soul to its terrors.

3. *There are actual instances of such Divine abandonment.* This is not a *prediction*, a menace; but a *statement*

of fact · "Thus saith the Lord, *I have taken away*," &c. Any in the assembly: old sinners, reckless and perverse youths! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way."

III. Sin, when persistent, alienates tenderness and pity.

1. *Criminals can expect little commiseration.*

2. *Condolence with sinners when suffering the consequences of their sins is an error.* It overlooks the righteousness of punishment.

3. *Generally the craving of guilty persons for sympathy* amid their miseries is attended by no contrition for their iniquities which entailed such disasters upon them.

Without contrition there can be no conversion, and

Without conversion no consolation.

Ver. 9. *Theme:* GODLESS MIRTH SILENCED. Steeped in guiltiness as were these people, they yet were hilarious. Their sins were allowed license. They lived on in mirth as if there were no God.

See *Addenda:* FRIVOLOUS SINNING.

I. Sinful revelries.

1. *Sinners sport with sin.* Live as if free to do as they listed.

2. *Unlicensed self-indulgences are their delight.*

3. *Conscience and God are silenced amid their revelries.*

4. *Mad mirth heeds not God's frown.* Indifferent and even defiant.

5. *To silence Divine denunciations* (as now through Jeremiah), sinners plunge into yet more exciting self-indulgences and gaieties. Oh, what a scene of reeking vice and appalling blasphemy lies under the eye of Heaven!

II. Nearing retribution. "I will cause to cease *in your days*."

1. *Reckless mirth cannot arrest the retribution it ignores.*

2. *Godless revelries will not escape God's judgment.* While revelry goes on within, "behold the Judge standeth before the door."

3. *The term of indulgence is alarmingly curtailed.* "In your days." While the prophet lived the end of all this impious conduct would come.

III. Silenced rejoicings. "I will cause to cease," &c.

1. *God will assuredly hush these impious revelries.*

2. *Death will seal the lips of carousers in silence.*

3. *Boon companions in sin will exchange hilarity for bitter lamentations.*

4. *Scenes of mirth will be deserted in the day of calamity.* They supply no solace to crushed lives.

5. *Troubles desolate the brightest homes, and silence the sounds of gladness.*

REFLECTIONS—

(*a.*) Joy may be pure; and God would have us joyful.

(*b.*) Pure joy has no sting, and is enduring.

(*c.*) God will enrich the joys of the good.

(*d.*) Trouble nor death can silence the gladness of the godly.

(*e.*) Their earthly scenes of joy will be by them exchanged for a land "where there is fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore."

(*f.*) Shun irreligious pleasures, and you shall inherit the blessedness of a life whose joys are Divine.

Ver. 10. *Theme:* SINNERS IN ALTERCATION WITH GOD.

The messages of Jehovah produce effect. Even rebels feel them. There is in Heaven's words something which compels the most godless to notice them. Indeed sinners are stirred to vindicate themselves against God's messages, and rise in strife with His prophets.

Instances of altercation with the prophets are numerous in the Scriptures (comp. especially chaps. v. 19; Ezek. ii. 6–8, xxxiii. 17; Mal. iii. 13, &c.)

I. Challenging the justice of God. "Wherefore," &c.

1. Willingly oblivious of their demerits.

2. Feigning innocency of great transgressions.

3. Self-excusings.

4. Professing ignorance of having done wrong.

II. Surprise at the severity of God. Their reply is virtually this:—

1. *The evil threatened is out of all*

reasonable proportion. "Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced *all* this *great* evil?"

2. *Such severity disproves His assured graciousness.* Did He not pledge Himself specially gracious to *us?* Yet "all this great *evil* against *us!*"

3. *There has been no specific sin* calling down such vengeance. "What is our iniquity, and what is our sin," &c.

II. Resistance of the condemnations of God. For all springs from this purpose.

1. *They refuse to be convinced of sin.*

2. *They resent the charge of God's prophet.*

3. *They reject the call to contrition.*

4. *They affect religious feelings* as a cloak for all their guilt. Speak piously: "What sin have *we* committed?" as if *they* could not be wicked. Further: What have we done "against the Lord *our* God"? Oh, the hypocrisy, to dare call Jehovah *their* God after such shameless apostasy! Rather, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord," &c.

Comments—

Ver. 10. "When people are desperately bad, and will not be told so, they must be regarded as heathens and publicans (Matt. xvii. 18; Tit. iii. 10; 1 Cor. v. 9)."—*Cramer.*

"If people are so hardened in their sins as to expostulate with the prophet, he is to show them that the severe sentence passed upon them is the consequence of idolatry, persisted in through many generations till it has finally deepened into natural apostasy."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 11. *God's reply.* See *Homilies* on chapters v. 19; vii. 25–28; xiii. 21, 22.

Ver. 12. *Theme:* WORSE THAN YOUR FATHERS.

The stream swells as it extends its course. These men were guiltier because they had—

I. Fuller warning The fate of their ancestors admonished them, giving emphasis to God's threatenings.

II. More restraints. God's dealings of mercy had been *known for longer time,* and proved in *more manifold forms.* They had a history to keep, a name to honour.

III. Greater advantages. Their *Scriptures were larger* than those their fathers possessed; for they grew as their history enlarged, and as successive prophets wrote and spake. Their *acquaintance with God and His will* was more clear. Their *indebtedness to His grace* was more evident.

IV. Heavier criminality.

Apostasy assumed most heinous forms.
Iniquity ran into revolting licenses.
Defiance of God's messages and prophet was more insolent.
Disregard of their national safety and honour was more reckless.

(*a.*) Sin increases in volume and force by an inevitable law of accumulation.

(*b.*) Actions take their moral character from the inducements which prompt them, or the restraints which check them.

(*c.*) Guilt attains its climax when it becomes insolently "stubborn."

Vers. 14, 15. *Theme:* THE GREATER FUTURE OF ISRAEL.

Restoration from Egypt will be forgotten in contrast with the deliverance from the North. Doubtless the return from Babylon is primarily meant here, but there yet awaits the ingathering "from all lands."

Note: This restoration is yet prospective: so points to the coming glories of God's ancient people.

I. Severer preliminary sufferings.

1. The bondage in the iron furnace of Egypt would be easy and light contrasted with the despotism under which they would groan in the North.

2. Instead of their being carried away into one land, as in Egypt, they would now be "driven" through "all lands;" *separated, helpless, abandoned.*

II. More astonishing preservation in exile.

1. *Dangers greater* In the hands of a more relentless despotism. The armies of Nineveh and Babylon ground other

nations they conquered and captured into a confused mass, destroying their individuality. In this captivity they would not be kept together, nor localised, but driven into widest dispersion.

2. *Destruction more threatening.* The North *meant* their complete obliteration as a people, and *did all that could be done* to effect it. Egypt did not design nor attempt this.

III. Grander supernatural redemption.

1. It should be recognised as *God's work of rescue.* "The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel."

2. It should *surpass their great historic deliverance from Egypt.* All along their career hitherto Jehovah had perpetually reminded them that He was their God that brought them out of Egypt: see the frequency and varied circumstances under which He recurred to that fact. But it would henceforth be forgotten in contrast with the coming redemption.

IV. Richer revelation of Divine grace.

1. Their greater sin did not lead God to abandon them.

2. Renewed apostasy did not weary God's patience.

3. Amid their exile He would jealously guard and individually care for them.

4. None should be lost in the glad ingathering to their own land.

Vers. 16, 17. *Theme:* NETS TO CATCH MEN.

They used trawl-nets in those days for sweeping the waters of fish and the country of game. (See note under *Manners and Customs* for explanation.)

I. Imagery of invading captors. This is the meaning of the figures here.

1. "*Fishers*" express the *ease* with which these invaders would capture the prey. The Northern armies would secure them with as little difficulty or trouble as anglers gather fishes within their trawl-nets.

2. "Hunters" express the *keenness* and *resoluteness* with which these Northern invaders would pursue their prey; neglecting no hiding-place, penetrating into every retreat, and allowing small hope of escape.

(*a.*) *Tempters thus throw out nets for the unwary*, and gather the simple into the enclosures of pleasure and sin. "We are not ignorant of *his devices.*"

(*b.*) *Disputers thus hunt the more valorous souls*, and seek to capture them with doubts of the truths of religion, and conquer them by force of argument.

(*c.*) *Various are the nets employed*, for the resources of those who would capture souls are multitudinous, yet *adapted to "catch men."* Flattery, indulgence, companionships, books, worldly advantages, to *draw into sin*; or annoyance, browbeating, calumny, argument, to *drive* to despair and neglect of God.

(*d.*) *Death drags its net* to gather in men, and it sweeps the sea of life effectually.

(*e.*) *The angels of judgment* will at the end of the world gather souls in from all lands, and not a sinner shall escape.

See *Addenda:* HUNTING.

II. Imagery of redeeming agencies.

1. *Of the recovery of scattered Israel from the lands of the spoiler.*

Some expositors misapplied these verses to that idea, and supposed God was here predicting their ingathering.

Yet the words may without inconsistency be so applied. The figure of *fishing* is so used by Ezekiel (xlvii. 9, 10). And surely in Israel's restoration they will be graciously hunted wherever they have been driven, and brought back from heights and valleys, and even repelling "holes of the rocks." For God's "eyes are upon all their ways" (ver. 17) in their dispersion.

2. *Of the capture of souls for Christ.* "I will make you fishers of men." "Being crafty, I caught you with guile."

(*a.*) *Gentle attractions of the Gospel.* Easily drawing souls into the kingdom.

(*b.*) *Manifold yet adapted truths of Scripture*, winning men individually into conviction and faith. The precious promises, words of sacred comfort, convincing truths, inspiring teaching of God's Word capture souls, and "sweetly force them in" to the enclosure of Divine assurances.

(c.) *The Holy Spirit's work*, of awakening souls to their state and need, of witness in consciences and hearts, and of revealing Christ and the Gospel to men.

(d.) *Wise ministrations of Gospel messengers.* Preachers and teachers so present Christ's truth, so contend with hearers' doubts and hesitancy to "persuade men," that, being wise, they "win souls," and so draw sinners and weary lives to the Saviour.

III. Imagery of a grand ingathering.

1. *Of the scattered sons of Israel to restored Zion.* From *all lands* shall they come. It shall be "as life from the dead" (Rom. xi. 15).

2. *Of humanity drawn into the faith of Christ.* "Other sheep I have, *them also will I bring*," &c. (John x. 16). "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will *draw all men* unto Me" (John xii. 32).

3. *Of redeemed souls to the glorious heaven.* "They shall come from the east and west, north and south, and sit down in the kingdom of God." "Redeemed out of every kindred and people and tongue and nation."

Ver. 17. *Theme:* OMNISCIENCE REGULATES JUDGMENT. "For Mine eyes are upon all their ways," &c. *Ways* means career of conduct. God's dispensations are determined upon full knowledge and examination of our doings.

I. Human life attracts the observant eye of God. "Mine eyes are upon all their ways." This fact, that God so *attentively* and *constantly* watches us, suggests—

1. *The Divine interest in His creature man.*

2. *Jehovah's solicitude for His people's welfare.*

3. *His great distress on beholding their faithlessness.*

4. *His longing to witness in them loyalty and love.*

II. Man's iniquity is minutely watched by Omniscience. "Neither is their iniquity hid from Mine eyes." It so grieves Him, and is so amazing after all He has done, that He cannot withdraw His gaze.

1. *Iniquity has a beginning, and a course of development.*

2. *The sinner's path is beset with restrictions or inducements.*

3. *Ungodliness varies in degree and animus.*

4. *Much wrongdoing is done secretly*, and guilt is often more in the heart than in the act. But God's eyes search out, and His thoughts weigh the measure of every act, or thought, or motive of sin. Yea, our secret sins are set in the light of His countenance. He understands our thought afar off.

III. Divine chastisements are determined by men's deeds. "Their *ways* are not hid from My face, neither their *iniquities* hid from Mine eyes."

1. *Caprice never moves God in His dispensations of wrath.*

2. *Heaviest judgments cannot exceed the sinner's demerits.*

3. *Anguish derives its keenest pang from the sufferer's knowledge that he righteously incurred it.*

4. *None can hope for escape from punishment so equitably administered.* "None doeth good and sinneth not." "He will appoint to every man according to his deed." "Every mouth shall be stopped, and all become guilty before God."

CONCLUSION:—

1. *Who can expect to evade judgment?* "If Thou, Lord shouldst work iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?"

2. *Where can redemption be found?* If we cannot escape from *judgment*, can we from the *sin* which necessitates it? Yes; Christ removes the sin, and thus ransoms us from the judgment.

> "Cover my defenceless head
> With the shadow of *Thy* wing."

Ver. 18. *Theme:* REQUITING SINNERS FOR THEIR WORK OF SPOLIATION. (See *Lit. Crit.* on this verse.)

We fail to recognise what wrong we do God, what ravages our misconduct works, when we sin.

I. Sin despoils what God prizes. "My land," "Mine inheritance."

1. *God has a right to all the pleasant scenes* which men wickedly use and prostitute to their selfish and sinful enjoyments. "The earth is the Lord's," &c.

2. *Upon every life He has set His seal*, and justly requires that we preserve its powers and affections inviolate. All we

are, all our endowments and abilities He entrusted us with.

3. *When we withhold from God His due,* in love, loyalty, and service, we "rob God." He made us for His glory.

4. *Every use of God's fair world for evil purposes is sacrilege.* We do Him a wrong. We "defile His land."

5. *Such cruel misuse of our life and the scenes we occupy* must be as offensive to God as it is criminal in itself. He values us, loves us—"so loved us that He gave His only-begotten Son" to redeem us, and grieves over our alienation and prodigality: "wasting our substance in a far country," degrading our being, and dishonouring His handiwork.

II. Sin's spoliations will God requite. "*I will recompense* their sin and their iniquity double, *because*," &c.

1. *The punishment foretold is but retribution for sins.* It was so with these Jews, it is so with us. Nothing is threatened against the sinner but is the "due reward of our deeds." Having defiled the land by their idolatry, they shall be driven out of it. And "the wicked," having misused earth's fair scene, "shall be turned into hell."

2. *Divine inflictions have a twofold severity.* Yes; it may be thought that God's punishments are therefore *excessive;* that He not merely requites sin, but goes beyond our deserts. St. Chrysostom here points out that "many, taking these words literally, have been troubled in mind, as though God did not punish men according to their desert, but more than their desert. But really *every punishment is twofold;* for first, there is the *loss of the blessing* which would have followed upon obedience, and secondly, *the presence of actual misery.*" So also, as *Dr. Payne Smith* suggests, *sin is twofold:* there is the *leaving of God's will undone,* and *the actual wrongdoing.*

Sinners lose God's favour *and* incur His wrath: "recompense double."

They lose the bliss of heaven *and* inherit the woe of hell: "double."

Yet nothing they lose and suffer can equal the *wrong* which, by "their iniquity and their sin," *they have done God!*

(1.) They defiled His land with the vileness of their detestable things, and

(2.) They filled His inheritance with their abominations.

Thus did they pervert sacred scenes to detestable purposes; render the holy land offensive to Him whose inheritance it was; and by their foul idolatry they gave the glory of their service and worship to abominations. "Oh, do not the abominable thing which I hate."

See *Addenda:* THE EVIL OF SIN.

Ver. 19. *Theme:* THE GOOD MAN'S STRENGTH, FORTRESS, AND REFUGE. "O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction."

I. The Infinite becomes the strength of the finite. We may well ask how the Eternal becomes the strength of the mortal; God, the strength of a man? And reply—

1. *By the confidence reposed in Him.* Confidence in a leader is the very strength of those who follow. Thus Wellington was the strength of his army, and Nelson of his navy. God's people have confidence in His wisdom, power, love; hence "through God they do valiantly, for He it is that treads down their enemies under them."

2. *The valorous deeds effected by men of God* are marvellous. Paul's list in Hebrews xi. illustrates the *triumphs of faith.* And what is faith but confidence in God? The triumphs of faith are the wonderful achievements effected through this confidence in God, so that God becomes the strength of men. Girded with strength Divine they can each say, "I can do all things."

3. The man whose strength is the Lord *is able to bear* what would crush other men. He who gave Samson strength to bear and carry away massive gates, gives to His servants strength to bear weightiest troubles and heaviest sufferings. See Paul's recital of his sufferings; yet he afterwards talks of "these *light* afflictions," &c.

II. Yet the Lord gives to His people protection. He is their "fortress."

This Divine fortress is impregnable. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Yet it may be asked, Have not thousands of God's saints been slaughtered by persecutors? What is the Book of Martyrs but a record of

God's slain ones? True; but the Divine fortress is for the protection of *souls*, not of bodies. The exposure of the body to peril on the one hand, and the safety of the soul on the other, are clearly indicated by our Lord's words, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

III. Further, He is "their Refuge in the day of affliction." In the evil day we hasten to Him as soldiers to a fortress when hotly pursued, or as vessels to a harbour when the wind blows a gale. When "tossed with tempest and not comforted," we have found the Lord "a refuge from the storm and a covert from the tempest." And this refuge is open still to every troubled saint and every penitent sinner.—*Rev. D. Pledge: "Walks with the Prophet Jeremiah."*

Vers. 19, 20. *Theme:* THE CONFESSION OF THE GENTILES. "The Gentiles shall come unto Thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?"

The result of God's judgments on the Jews will be that both the Jews when restored, and the Gentiles who have witnessed those judgments, shall renounce idolatry for the worship of Jehovah (Fausset).

(Note: This prophecy in course of fulfilment.)

I. Their repentance. "Shall come." They had followed the devices of their own hearts—its failure "profited them nothing." Trusting in gods made by their own hands could not profit them; for, "Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?" a contradiction in terms. They repent of their folly, and come to Jehovah—the only true God

(*a.*) *Repentance is necessary to our acceptance by God.* A man must realise the folly of his sin, and, turning from it with his face toward God, must make confession of his transgressions in order to their remittance. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 38).

(*b.*) *Must be with the heart.* Sincere. "Our real existence in the sight of God consists in the inner and not in the outer life" (Farrar).

II. Their confession. "Our fathers have inherited lies and things wherein there is no profit." Idolatry in all its forms; not only gods of wood and stone, but all the idols of our own heart, our own imagination—*e.g.*, the love of riches. All idolatry must be renounced, and a confession made unto God that we have abandoned them. The essential element of confession is that it be spiritual and true. To a right confession we must have—

(*a.*) *A knowledge of our own hearts.* If this is possessed, the heart will be laid open to God for its purification. There is only one way of getting a heart and mind pure, and that is by confessing to God its present impurities—imploring Him to create in us a clean heart.

(*b.*) *Faith in God.* In His willingness to hear, in His power to do. Their faith was strong; they acknowledge that, apart from God, all is vanity and lies. The world promises much, but when those promises are chased and caught, you have in your hand nothing better than "vanity and lies."

III. Their acceptance. This we infer, because "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (John i. 9). Wherever the contrite heart is, there is the forgiving God. The Gentiles shall come—they are coming, and by the power and attraction of the Cross. The Gospel has many victories yet to achieve. The Saviour said, "And I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all men unto Me."—*Achilles Taylor.*

Vers. 19, 21. *Theme:* MISSIONARY SERMON.

The true knowledge of God:

I. It is to be had in Christianity (ver. 19).

II. It will also make its way to the heathen. For

1. It is God's will that they should be instructed (ver. 21).

2. They are ready to be instructed (vers. 19, 20).

Comments—

Ver. 19. "*My strength and my fortress.*" "Lit., my strength and my place of strength—the one for attack, and the other for defence."—*Speaker's Com.*

"*The calling of the heathen* is very *consolatory.* For as children are rejoiced at heart when they see that their parents are greatly honoured and obtain renown and praise in all lands, so do all true children of God rejoice when they see that God's name is honoured and His glory more widely extended."—*Cramer.*

Ver. 21. "I will *this once cause them to know.*" "As the Jews had chosen to put their trust in such senseless things as idols, of which the very heathen will be ashamed (ver. 19), Jehovah will teach them *this once, i.e.*, in a summary manner once for all, by *a punishment which the nation shall never forget*, that there is a difference between Him and idols."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"THIS ONCE." "Whether we consider the greatness of the national disgrace and suffering caused by it, or its effect upon the mind of the Jews, the burning of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, followed by the captivity of the people at Babylon, stands out as the greatest manifestation of God's hand in all His dealings with them. Neither in the times of the Judges, nor in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, was there anything comparable to it. Only one other event in their history is of equal magnitude—the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; but that was the closing of their history as the preparatory Church, and comes therefore under a different category."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"I WILL CAUSE THEM TO KNOW." "Nothing can be learned of God without God. God instructs the people by His mouth and His hand, *verbis et verberibus.*"—*Cramer.*

"*Know that my name is* THE LORD." "The fulfiller of His threatenings, as well as the performer of His promises" (Exod. vi. 3).—*Lowth.*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XVI.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 2. MARRIAGE.

"God is the best Maker of all marriages."—*Shakespeare.*

When the Rev. Philip Henry was minister at Worthenbury, he sought the hand of the only daughter of a wealthy man. The father demurred, saying that though Mr. Henry was an excellent preacher and a gentleman, yet he did not know from whence he came. "True," said the daughter, "but I know where he is going, and I should like to go with him."

"Marriage is a feast, where the grace is sometimes better than the dinner."—*Colton.*

"We are really what we are relatively."—*P. Henry.*

"Let us no more contend, nor blame
Each other, blam'd enough elsewhere; but strive,
In offices of love, how we may lighten
Each other's burden, in our share of woe."
—*Milton's* "Paradise Lost."

Family Maxims: "Let God be first." "Be happy and make happy."

Ver. 9. FRIVOLOUS SINNING.

"Fools make a mock of sin, will not believe
It carries such a danger in its sleeve.
'How can it be?' they say, 'that such a thing,
So full of sweetness, e'er should wear a sting?'
They know not that it is the very spell
Of sin, to make men laugh themselves to hell.
Look to thyself then, deal with sin no more,
Lest He that saves against thee shuts the door."—*Bunyan.*

Ver. 16. HUNTING.

The original term for hunting occurs in reference to the invasion of human rights, in 1 Sam. xxiv. 12, Lam. iii. 15, and Jer. xvi. 16. This usage affords a clue to Nimrod's character. With the band of lawless spirits his skill had attracted, he proceeded from hunting beasts to oppressing man:—

"Proud Nimrod first the mighty chase began;
A mighty hunter—and his prey was man."
—*Pope.*

Hunting, with its snares, may remind

us of that mighty hunter Satan, and his devices—pitfalls, decoys, snares, &c. —for the unwary. Hence the duty of watchfulness: "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird" (Prov. i. 17). "Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." Satan is now the "mighty hunter" who hunts down sins, ignorance, bad habits, &c. God helps us to escape out of the machinations of the wicked (Ps. cxxiv. 6–8). Death is a great hunter (Ecc. ix. 12).—*Topics for Teachers.*

Ver. 18. The evil of sin.

We might illustrate the evil of sin thus: Supposing I were going along a street, and were to dash my hand through a large pane of glass, what harm would I receive?—"You would be punished for breaking the glass."—Would that be all the harm I should receive?—"Your hand would be cut by the glass."—Yes; and so it is with sin. If you break God's laws, you shall be punished for breaking them; and your soul is hurt by the very act of breaking them.—*J. Inglis.*

CHAPTER XVII.

Critical and Exegetical Notes.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. Vers. 1-18 continue the prophecy of chap. xvi. A distinct break in the continuity of the book is noticeable at ver. 19. [*Keil* seems alone in suggesting that this section "may very well be joined with the preceding general reflections as to the springs of mischief and of well-being; inasmuch as it shows how the way of safety appointed to the people lies in keeping the decalogue, as exemplified in one of its fundamental precepts." This is so far true, but is not sufficient to decide the connection with the antecedent prophecy when this section, vers. 19–27, stands out so manifestly distinct and complete in itself.] At *what date must this section*, 19–27, *be placed?* Plainly, before the guilty relapse under Jehoiakim; for the tone of the message is not condemnatory: It is, as *Dr. Payne Smith* says, "dissuasive of future neglect" rather than objurgatory of past misconduct. *Henderson* suggests *Josiah's* reign, "delivered in connection with and shortly after his reformation." *Hitzig* assigns it to the period of Jeconiah, or that immediately following Jehoiakim's death. But *Eichorn*, *Rosenmüller*, *Maurer*, *Naegelsbach*, *Payne Smith*, and *Jamieson* agree that its deliverance was at the outset of Jehoiakim's reign, before he began the evil course by which he undid the good effected by Josiah's reformation. Its similarity to chap. xxii. 1–5 makes it probable that the two messages were contemporaneous, and this latter was doubtless delivered in Jehoiakim's reign also. *Usher* assigns vers. 1–18 to B.C. 605; and vers. 19–27 to B.C. 600. *Hales:* B.C. 601 and 599 respectively. (See *Chronological Note* of chap. vii.)

For 2. Contemporary Scriptures; 3. National Affairs; 4. Contemporaneous History, see also *Notes* on chap. vii.

5. Geographical References. — Ver. 3. "*My mountain* (Jerusalem) *in the field:*" the surrounding country. Ver. 6. *A salt land* (see Deut. xxix. 23; comp. Job. xxxix. 6, Ps. cvii. 34). Salt regions suggest, as a figure, total want of the means of life. Ver. 19. "*Gate of the children of the people:*" described further as that "whereby the kings of Judah come in:" most probably the *Gate of David*, now called the Joppa Gate. Denominated the People's Gate, as being the principle thoroughfare for the tribes coming from the south, south-west, and north-west. Ver. 26. "*Cities of Judah:*" that part of the country bordering on Jerusalem. "*Land of Benjamin:*" the northern province of Judah, and south of Ephraim. "*The plain:*" the low country between Joppa and Gaza (Josh. ix. 1, xii. 8, xv. 21, 33). *The mountains:* the hill country of Judea (Josh. xv. 48 *sq.*) "*South:*" southern district of Judah. "The verse is interesting," says Dr. Payne Smith, "as specifying the exact limits of the dominions of the Davidic kings, now confined to Judah and Benjamin. These two tribes are divided, according to their physical conformation, into the *Shefêlah*, or low country, lying between the mountains and the Mediterranean; the mountains, which formed the central region, extending to the wilderness of Judah, on the Dead Sea; and the *Negeb*, or arid region, which lay to the south of Judah."

6. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 5. "*Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.*" Many commentators find here reference to the perfidious character and tyrannical conduct of Jehoiakim. So also *Maurer* recognises in ver. 9 an allusion to Jehoiakim's cupidity.

7. Natural History.—Ver. 6. "*Heath in the desert:*" עֲרָעָר is generally accepted as describing the *juniper tree*, which (says *Henderson*) is found in the vicinity of the Arabah, or the Great Valley to the south of the Dead Sea, and doubtless the same "desert" which Jeremiah here calls הָעֲרָבָה; the image, therefore, being a solitary juniper in an arid desert. Pliny says that the "heath" was one of the plants excluded from religious uses, because it is neither sown

nor planted, and has neither fruit nor seed. (See *Lit. Crit.* below on "Heath"). Ver. 11. "*Partridge sitteth on eggs:*" קֹרֵא; the Arabs apply this name, *Korea*, to a *bustard*. It is not true of the *partridge* that she stole the eggs of other birds and hatched them as her own; but the ancients believed she did. Henderson cites in proof EPIPHAN. *Physiol.* cap. ix.; ISID. *Origg.* xii. 7. But Jamieson urges that "it is not needful to make Scripture allude to an exploded notion as if it were true," and therefore states that the name "Korea," from a root, *to call*, alluding to its cry, is now applied to a *bustard*—heavy birds of slow flight, like the ostrich.

8. **Manners and Customs.**—Ver. 1. "*Pen of Iron:*" (See *Note* on chap. viii. 8, under *Manners and Customs*. Comp. Job xix. 24, Ps. xlv. 1, Isa. viii. 1.) The iron *stylus* was used only for writing or carving letters in a hard material. "*Point of a diamond:*" indicating the very hardest substance on which the graving was wrought. "*Upon the horns of your altars:*" the names of the gods, to whom sacrifices were devoted, were inscribed on the horns of the altars (comp. Acts xvii. 23). Ver. 2. "*Altars and groves,*" &c. (comp. Note *in loc.* chap. ii. 20). *Groves* should be Asherahs, in all probability *images of Astarte*, the goddess of the heavenly hosts, represented under the imagery of a "tree." Ver. 3. *High places*" on which it was their custom to erect idolatrous altars. Ver. 21. "*Bear no burden on the Sabbath day:*" Probabilities are that the country people brought their agricultural produce into Jerusalem with them when they came ostensibly to worship on the Sabbath; and that the residents of Jerusalem "carried forth burdens out of their houses" (ver. 22), *i.e.*, took their wares to the city gates, and bartered or exchanged with the villagers for their goods (comp. Neh. xiii. 15–22).

9. **Literary Criticisms.**—Vers. 1–4 are omitted by the LXX., and *Bleek* coincides in their omission; but all the other Greek versions and authorities retain the verses. Ver. 2. "*Groves by the green trees:*" instead of "by" read "upon." The sense seems to require *under;* but the LXX. have *ἐπί*. Ver. 3. "*Thy high places for sin:*" Text obscure here: Ewald recalls the similar phrase in chap. xv. 13, and renders, *without price for thy sins*. The reading may however be, "I will give thy substance, all thy treasures, *and thy high places* to the spoil *on account of* (for) sin throughout (committed throughout) all thy borders." Ver. 4. "*And thou, even thyself:*" וּבָךְ Lit., *even with thyself, i.e.*, with thy bare life; or (Henderson) *and through thee*, by means of thine own wickedness; or (Jamieson) *owing to thyself*, by thy own fault; or (*Vulgate*) *and that with thyself*, alone. Ver. 6. "*Heath:*" עֲרָעָר. The word in the same form appears in Ps. cii. 17, *destitute. Like a destitute man;* and *Speaker's Com.* insists that the verbs, *he shall see* (or fear), and *shall inhabit*, plainly show that a man is here meant, and not a plant. But surely the "heath" is not the nominative of these verbs! Rather *the man* (ver. 5) of whom ver. 6 recounts, "*He* shall be *like* the heath," &c. There is in this verse a contrast of the solitary pining juniper tree [see *Natural History* above] and "the tree planted by the waters" (ver. 8). Ver. 9. "*Deceitful:*" עָקֹב, from עָקַב, to *lie in wait for, trip, act insidiously*—the word from which Jacob took his name. "*Desperately wicked:*" *woefully sick* (ver. 16): אָנוּשׁ, *incurable, malignant, desperate*. Mentally sick, as in chap. xv. 18. Ver. 11. "*Sitteth on eggs and hatcheth them not:*" Lit., *gathereth young which she hath not brought forth*. Ver. 12. "*A glorious high throne,*" &c. Most probably this verse should read on continuously with the next, thus: "*Thou throne of glory, on High from the beginning; thou place of our sanctuary, thou hope of Israel, the Lord!* So Ewald, Graf, Keil, Payne Smith. Ver. 16. "*Not hastened:*" *i.e.*, sought to escape. "*From being a pastor;*" Hitzig and Graf: "from following lovingly after thee." Umbreit reads: "I have not forced myself forward to follow Thee as a shepherd." But *Speaker's Com.* gives, *From being a shepherd* (see on. ii. 8, *ruler*) *after thee; i.e.*, as one invested with authority by God to guide and direct the political course of the nation. *Naegelsbach* thinks Jeremiah means he was literally a pastor, a shepherd lad tending his flock when God called him, and pleads that priests had pasture land (comp. Josh. xxi. and 1 Chron. vi.) intended expressly for the cattle (Num. xxxv. 4), and Anathoth had its pasture (Josh. xxi. 18). But *Henderson* and *Wordsworth* suggest: *I have not hastened away*, or backward, *from being a shepherd*. Ver. 21. "*Take heed to yourselves:*" *in your souls, i.e.*, conscientiously. Naegelsbach: "*Care with foresight for your souls.*" Ver. 25. "*This city shall remain for ever:*" be inhabited; not mere continuance, but populousness.

HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XVII.

Section 1–4. Judah's guilt flagrantly manifest.
" 5–11. Spiritual corruption traced to its root-causes.
" 12–18. Safety and vindication sought in God.
" 19–27. Exhortation to hallow the Sabbath.

Section 1–4.—JUDAH'S GUILT FLAGRANTLY MANIFEST.

The denial of having sinned against Jehovah (xvi. 10) must mean that the fact of idolatry is by them denied. Against such a bold and shameless assertion, the prophet rises here with visibly increasing indignation. He says that—

I. Judah's sin is forcibly certified, and, as it were, recorded in the archives.

1. In their own *consciences;* in which the memory of their idolatrous abominations is fixed like an ineffaceable brand. And—

2. *Externally,* on the horns of the altars, where the blood of the slaughtered children adheres as an equally ineffaceable memorial (ver. 1).

II. Judah's sin is inerradicably remembered. While the two testimonies (in their own *consciences* and on the horns of *the altars*) were deep and inextinguishable to them, *the actors present* at their idolatrous barbarities, it was also true that—

1. *Their children would never lose the impression* of that horrible cult which had snatched so many from their midst. The horror of the sight of those frightful holocausts would remain unforgetable.

2. *So deep was this impression,* that *the mere sight of green trees and high hills* was sufficient to refresh the revolting memory continually (ver. 2).

III. Judah's sin therefore would be severely punished. On the basis of the *facts* thus *certified,* the prophet—

1. *Repeats the announcement of the Divine punishments.* These will consist in (*a*) plunder of substance; (*b*) desolation of the land, according to the analogy of the year of release; and (*c*) deportation into an unknown land (vers. 3, 4).

2. *Bewails the desolations which Judah must endure.* A cry of grief escapes the prophet's lips as he describes the ravages with which Judah's crimes will be punished. "Oh my mountain in the field!" His patriotic soul bemoans the catastrophe which sin invokes. (Comp. *Naegelsbach* in *Lange.*)

The people had asked (xvi. 10), *What is our iniquity, and what is our sin?* Here we have a reply to their challenge.

I. The indictment is fully proved. Both the fact and the fault. Their sin is too plain to be denied, and too bad to be excused.

1. They cannot plead *not guilty,* for their sins are upon record in the book of God's omniscience and their own conscience; nay, they are obvious to the eye and observation of the world (vers. 1, 2).

(*a.*) *They are written before God,* and in most legible and indelible characters, and *sealed among His treasures,* never to be forgotten (Deut. xxxii. 34).

(*b.*) *What is so written will never be worn out by time.* "With a pen of iron," &c. "Graven in the rock for ever." Sin is never *forgotten* till it is *forgiven.* It is "*graven on the heart,*" and though covered for a time, cannot be rubbed out, and will be produced in evidence when the books shall be opened. If they will not own the conviction of their consciences, then *the horns of their altars* will witness against them. And *their own "children"* shall be witness against them: "they remember *the altars* and *the groves*" to which their parents took them when they were little (ver. 2).

2. They cannot plead that *they repent,* or are come to a better mind. For as their guilt is undeniable, so their inclination to sin is invincible and incurable. In this sense many understand vers. 1 and 2.

(*a.*) Their sin is *deeply engraven in their hearts.* It is inwrought into their very natures; and is *as dear to them* as that is of which we say, It is engraven on our hearts!

(*b.*) *They had pledged themselves to their idols;* bound themselves as "with cords to the horns of their altars;" and given up their names to their idols.

(*c.*) *They remember their idolatries with affection.* For ver. 3 may be rendered thus: As they remember their children, so remember they their altars and their groves—they are *fond of them,* and loth to part with them, as men with their children.

II. The judgment is affirmed and the sentence ratified. Inasmuch as they were thus wedded to their sins and will not part with them—

1. They shall be *made to part with their treasures* (ver. 3). Both the *stores of*

the city and the *products of the country* will be seized by the Chaldeans. Justly are men stripped of that with which they have served their idols, and made the food and fuel of their lusts. What *we make for a sin* (ver. 3), God will make *for a spoil.*

2. They shall be *made to part with their inheritance* (ver. 4).

(*a.*) *God owns it was their "heritage,"* and that He *gave* it them. It was an aggravation of their folly in throwing themselves out of the possession of it.

(*b.*) *Their discontinuance in occupancy of the land should give it rest.* The word here used, *discontinue,* is the word used in the appointment (Ex. xxiii. 11) that the land should rest one year in seven. They did not observe that law, and now God would compel them to let it rest. But it should be *no rest to them,* for "they should serve their enemies in a land they knew not."

Observe (i.) Sin works a *discontinuance of our comforts;* deprives us of the enjoyment of that which God has given us.

Observe (ii.) A discontinuance of the possession is *not a defeasance of the right.* It is intimated that upon their repentance they should recover possession again.—*M. Henry.*

Section 5–11.—Spiritual Corruption Traced to its Root-causes.

All this *outward perfidy and prostitution* are but *manifestations* of inward and spiritual apostasy. The whole affections and dispositions of the soul have gone astray from God, and therefore their moral conduct has become degraded, and their religious behaviour disloyal. This section delineates *three radical defects,* and to each is attached its corresponding and *appropriate judgment.*

I. A perverse disposition.

1. *Its action.* It rests not in Jehovah, but regards flesh as its better confidence, seeking in man the spring and supply of good (ver. 5).

2. *Its judgment.* The forlorn and deserted picture of ver. 6 supplies an idea of the consequences of deserting God. This desolate result is further emphasised by the contrast presented in vers. 7 and 8.

II. Perfidiousness of heart. Total faithlessness, and illimitable trickery.

1. The depths of its deceptiveness human thought fails to reckon (ver. 9).

2. God's reckoning and punishment will rest upon His complete knowledge of the heart's wickedness (ver. 10).

III. Impetuous avarice.—Ver. 11.

1. *It cruelly acquires* that for which it restlessly craves. Seizes as its own the treasures of others.

2. *It forcibly relinquishes* the spoil it has violently seized. Brief years are threatened, and a fool's end.

Section 12–18.—Safety and Vindication Sought in God.

Here the prophet turns from the corruption of his people, saddened and sickened at heart, to meditate on his God and his personal safety in Him. This was the realisation of the Psalmist's prayer: "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Then there arise before his contemplation—

I. Majestic guarantees for the godly soul.—Vers. 12, 13. He apostrophises God. [See *Lit. Crit.* on verse.]

1. He celebrates *the power and glory of God.* "Thou *Throne,*" symbol of royal power and supreme sway. "Throne of Glory," language expressive of highest majesty, surpassing all powers, most glorious in royalty, dominion, and dignity.

2. *The eternal excellency of God.* "On high from the beginning." *Exalted* on high, since loftiest glory is His; yet also highest in *excellency;* for who in grace and glory can be compared to God? And "from the beginning"—"or ever Thou

hadst formed the earth and the world," or from the outset of Israel's national existence, God has been supreme; supreme in personal majesty, supreme as Israel's Lord.

3. *The devout soul's hiding-place.* "Thou place of our sanctuary"—for security, rest, reverence, and bliss.

4. *Israel's covenanted Hope.* "O Jehovah!" name of God in which He is pledged to His people. "The Hope of Israel;" *never having failed them* through all their past history. Their *enduring Hope*, notwithstanding all they have done to alienate Thee. *Their sole Hope*, for, losing Thee, what have they left? Their *future Hope;* for after mournful desertion of Thee, they will return to the Lord as their "everlasting strength."

5. *The living spring of refreshing.* "Fountain of living waters." (See *Notes* on chaps. ii. 13, ix. 1.)

Thereupon Jeremiah utters his assertion, that *forsaking Him* will eventuate in *shame* while they live, and contemptuous *oblivion* as the end!

II. Fearless appropriation of Divine graciousness.—Vers. 14–18. Jeremiah lays his claim to all that he knows God to be. Treasures of grace are valueless s far as we are concerned, unless they become ours. The prophet appeals tc God for—

1. *Present tranquillity and safety* (ver. 14). This appeal for *healing* suggests the troubled and aggrieved state of his spirit (Ps. vi. 3, xxx. 3). For *salvation;* that his life was encompassed with perils—from scorners and unbelievers, who rejected his word and his claim to prophetic mission. He bases his appeal on *what God was to him*—"my praise:" he had *boasted* in God, and had occasion to *rejoice* in God; and more, Jehovah had delighted him with favours, and distinguished him with honours as His servant.

2. *Official vindication.* He was ridiculed (ver. 15). He had been faithful (ver. 16). God was his witness—"Thou knowest;" and that guaranteed that God would make others know the verity of the words he had spoken in God's name.

3. *Future refuge.* A "day of evil" was coming; full of "*terror*" to evil-doers (ver. 17). But in that evil time *God would discriminate* between the persecutors and the persecuted, confounding them but sheltering the prophet; and God would *fulfil His predictions* in their complete destruction. *Refutation* of his foes, *refuge* for himself.

"*Double destruction;*" *.e.*, sharing in the *national ruin* which was impending, and suffering for *their sin* in persecuting and deriding God's messenger.

Section 19–27.—Exhortations to Hallow the Sabbath.

A sermon which the prophet *received from the Lord*, and was ordered to deliver in the most solemn and public manner—proclaimed in all the places of concourse, "the gates." First at the *court-gate*, whereby "the kings of Judah" enter: let them be told their duty first, and particularly this duty. Then also *in all the gates of Jerusalem*, as being a matter of great and general concern.

I. How the Sabbath is to be sanctified, and what is the law concerning it.

1. They must rest from their worldly employ. "Bear no burdens" into the city, nor carry any out of their houses.

2. They must apply themselves to the proper business of the day. "Hallow ye the Sabbath-day," &c. (ver. 22). Consecrate it to the service of God.

3. They must herein be very circumspect. "Take heed to yourselves" (ver. 20). Where God is jealous, we must be cautious.

4. They must observe the statute made and provided. This was no new imposition, but what "I commanded *your* fathers."

II. How the Sabbath had been profaned—Ver. 23. Their fathers' disobedience in this respect is mentioned to show—

1. That there needed a reformation in Sabbath conduct.

2. That God had a just controversy with them, for the long transgression of this law.

3. And because they disregarded this law with the intent to evade all instruction on other commands. Where Sabbaths are neglected, all religion sensibly goes to decay.

III. With what blessings God would reward Sabbath sanctification. Though their fathers had been guilty of its desecration, yet if (ver. 24) they would make conscience of Sabbath sanctification—

1. The *court* shall flourish (ver. 25). The honour of the government is the joy of the kingdom; and the support of religion would contribute greatly to both.

2. The *city* shall flourish (ver. 25). "This city shall remain for ever." Whatever supports religion tends to establish the civil interests of a land.

3. The *country* shall flourish (ver. 26). The *cities of Judah* and the *land of Benjamin* shall be replenished with inhabitants, abounding in plenty and living in peace, which shall appear in the multitude and value of their offerings to God. By this the flourishing of a country may be judged of: What does it for the honour of God?

4. The *church* shall flourish (ver. 24). "Meat offerings," &c. Everything shall go in the right channel.

V. With what judgments God would punish Sabbath profanation.—Ver. 27.

1. The enemy would besiege their city, "kindle a fire in the gates." And justly shall those gates be fired that are not used to shut out sin, and to keep the people in to an attendance on their duty.

2. The fire should destroy their palaces—where the princes and nobles dwell; who did not use their power and interest, as they ought to have done, to keep up the honour of God's Sabbaths.

3. The fire shall not be quenched, until it has laid the whole city in ruins. Fulfilled by the army of the Chaldeans (chap. lii. 13). The profanation of the Sabbath is a sin for which God has often contended with a people by fire.—Comp. *M. Henry.*

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* SINS HOLD ON THE INMOST MAN. "It is graven upon the table of their heart."

Suggestions:—

i. *Sin indelibly impresses itself upon sinners.* Its mark is deep. Its influence is not superficial or evanescent, but ineffaceable and perpetual.

ii. *Sin had become inwrought into their affections.* Worked into the very texture of the heart.

iii. *Hid in the deepest secrecy of their being.* The heart is a profound hiding-place. It is the citadel and secret chamber of the entire man.

iv. *It cannot be ignored in their own consciousness.* Every movement—affection and action—of the heart would make the presence therein of sin evident. It would testify its presence by the force of feeling.

v. *Cannot be erased by their own efforts.* If sin was ever to be removed, "a new heart" must be given. And only God can "create in us a clean heart."

See *Addenda:* INDELIBLE RECORDS OF SIN.

Theme: THE DEEP-SEATED CHARACTER OF SIN. The hardness of Judah's heart is repeated in the stubbornness of barbarian, Roman, Greek, Scythian; seen indeed in ourselves.

I. Answer the question, What is sin? Always hearing about it, from preacher; and reading about it, in every Scripture page. What is it?

Pharisee says: "It is eating with unwashen hands," &c. But to break some of the commandments, especially the ecclesiastical commandments, of men, may be virtuous, and indicate enlightenment!

Sin is the repudiation of our obligations to God. "Against *Thee* have I sinned."

II. How is the fixedness of sin proved?

1. It is *in the very heart* of man. Deep ingrained.

2. They sinned *in their very religion.* "On the horns of their altars." Converted men frequently prefer the form of religion most gratifying to their tastes, ears, and sight. Or they stain the horns of God's altars by their *own righteousness*, by *carelessness*, by *vain thoughts*, by *hypocrisy*,—as Demas and Judas.

III. What is the cause of this? How did sin get such a firm footing in humanity? The answer is—

1. *We must never forget the Fall.* We are none of us as God made us. "We are born in sin," &c.

2. *Our habits of sin.* Well may sin be deeply engraven in the man who has continued in his iniquity for twenty, forty, perhaps seventy years. "Can the Ethiopian change," &c. Use is second nature.

3. Sin is a *most clinging and defiling thing.* One license renders us easily enslaved.

4. The *prince of the powers of darkness allies himself with sin.* He will never let the tinder lie idle for want of sparks.

IV. What is the cure for all this? Can sin, thus ingrained, ever be got out? It *must* be got out if we are ever to enter heaven. Only done by supernatural processes.

1. *Christ Jesus does take away these deeply-inscribed lines* of sin from human nature. It is part of the covenant of grace and part of His Gospel that Jesus can give to us hearts free from tendency to sin.

2. And since the guiltiness of sin is as permanent as sin itself, *Jesus Christ is able to take our guilt away.* "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." And the vilest sinner may be "made partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust."—*Spurgeon:* "*Metropolitan Pulpit*," *No* 812.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* OUR CHILDREN'S RECOLLECTION OF OUR SIN. "Whilst their children remember their altars," &c.

Probably we here have—

i. An allusion to their sacrifice of children to Molech.

ii. The horrors of such blood-stained rites would be for ever engraven upon the memory of any who were present to witness them.

I. Our evil deeds vividly impress our children.

II. Fixed upon their memory, our children may keep alive recollections we fain would obliterate.

III. Parental sins will reappear in our children's lives. The horrid ghosts of our old iniquities resuscitated!

IV. Remembrancers of old iniquities crowd around our life. We may shun suggestive scenes that bring up dark memories, but our "children remember the groves," &c., and will point them out to us. We cannot clear the world of these accusers.

V. Children may thus become witnesses against us.

1. By *their inability to forget* what we would gladly consign to oblivion;

2. By *their reproduction of our evil habits*, continuing the wicked ways they learned from us; and

3. *Before God in the last day of account*, when we, and our children with us, stand in the judgment.

Vers. 3, 4. See note in *Geog. References;* also *Lit. Crit.* on these verses; also *Homilies and Comments* on chap. xv. 13, 14.

Comments—"*My mountain in the field:*" Jerusalem or Zion; called "the Rock of the plain" in chap. xxi. 13, and "Mountain of Jehovah," Micah iv. 2.

"Being the place which Jehovah had chosen as the residence of His visible glory, He claims it as His; just as He frequently calls it 'My holy mountain' (Isa. xi. 9, lvi. 7)."—*Henderson.*

Ver. 5. *Theme:* THE ACCURSED TRUST. The Jews, in looking now to the Assyrians and then to the Egyptians, thought to gain sufficient defence against God Himself. This false confidence was

a hindrance to their relying on the favour of God, and kept them from repentance.

I. Men are variously deceived while trusting in men.

1. They *begin with themselves.* Every one is inflated with vain confidence, either in his own prudence, dexterity, or power. There is no one, even the most wretched, who does not trust in himself before he trusts in others; no one so contemptible but that he swells with some secret pride.

2. *They take aids to themselves from every quarter.* This is the out-working of what they deem their own prudence. Yet their goings round are *useless;* and not only so, but they turn out to their own *destruction.*

II. God derides the folly of such delusive trust in men.

1. He declares that *they who so trust are "cursed."* This curse of God ought to strike us with *terror;* for we hence learn that *God is highly displeased* with all those who seek their own salvation in the world and in creatures.

2. He charges such with *estrangement of heart from Himself.* When confidence is reposed in flesh, God is deprived of His own honour. These two things cannot be connected—confidence in flesh, and reliance on God. When water is blended with fire, *both perish.* To attempt to unite trust in man with trust in God is like mixing heaven and earth together. It is to confound the order of nature, when men imagine that they have *two* objects of trust, and ascribe half of their salvation to God and half to themselves or to other men.

3. All are *apostates and deserters from God* who fix their hope on men. True in the *present life;* twofold a madness in respect of *eternal things.*—Arranged from *Calvin.*

Comments—

Ver. 5. "There is great occasion for this *cursed* dependence on flesh, when one, from the hope of good personal protection, gives up the work of the Lord to the powers of the earth. It is true the Church is to have foster-parents who are kings, but, nevertheless, neither kings nor princes are its tutelar deities, much less lords and commanders of the Church; but One is our Master, One our Judge, One our King—the Crucified."—*Zinzendorf.*

Ver. 5–8. *Theme:* THE DUTY OF TRUSTING IN GOD.

Every created being derives its existence and support from God. Yet man is prone to depend on the creature rather than on Him. Though constantly disappointed, he still leans on an arm of flesh. But such conduct is justly reprobated.

I. The characters that are contrasted.

(*a.*) Every man by nature trusts in man, makes flesh his arm, and in his heart departs from the Lord. We need not go to heathens or infidels to find persons of this description. We need only search the records of our own conscience. *In temporal things* we never think of looking above the creature. If they be prosperous, we trust in uncertain riches, and take the glory to ourselves. If adverse, we lean to our own understanding and exertions, or rely for succour on our friends. *In spiritual things* we seek to establish a righteousness of our own. We expect to repent and serve God by our own strength.

(*b.*) The true Christian "trusts in the Lord, and makes the Lord his hope." He trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ as the *God of providence.* He commits his affairs to Him, expecting His promised aid. He trusts also in Jesus as the *God of grace.* He renounces all hope in his own goodness or resolutions. These marks afford a sure line of distinction between the nominal and real Christian. Nor is this difference between them of trifling import.

II. Their respective conditions. Men's eternal state will be fixed with perfect equity. The conditions of the characters before us are strongly contrasted:—

1. *Simply:* "blessed," &c.; "cursed," &c. What can be more important than these declarations? They are not the dictates of enthusiasm, but the voice of God. "Thus saith the Lord." God has given His Son to be our Saviour; but while some confide in Him, others, by not trusting in Him, reject Him.

How reasonable then is it that a curse should attach to these and a blessing to those! Such a difference in their conditions seems the *necessary* result of their own conduct. Let every one inquire which of these conditions he has reason to expect.

2. *Figuratively:* "heath in desert,"—"tree planted by the waters." To mark the contrast more clearly, it is further observed that both the blessing and the curse shall be—

(*a.*) *Abundant.* The *unbeliever* "shall be like the heath in the desert." He shall be left in a state of extreme barrenness and wretchedness; and this, too, amidst all his boasted fulness (Job xx. 22). The *believer* "shall be as a tree planted by the waters," &c. He shall be made flourishing and happy by rich supplies of grace (Phil. iv. 9).

(*b.*) *Unmixed.* The *unbeliever* "shall not see when good cometh." He receives none of the heavenly dew that falls around him. The *believer* "shall not see when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green, nor shall he be careful in the year of drought." He may experience heat and drought, *i.e.*, he shall, however, not be injured, but benefited by them (Heb. xii. 11).

(*c.*) *Eternal.* The *unbeliever* "shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited." He shall be an outcast from God in the regions of misery. The *believer* "shall not cease from yielding fruit." His present enjoyments are the pledge and earnest of eternal happiness.

Infer (1.) How glorious a person must Christ be! If He were a mere creature, it would be ruinous in the extreme to trust in Him. (2.) How are we all concerned to trust in Christ. God regards, not merely our outward conduct, but the frame of our hearts. On this our present and everlasting happiness depends.—*Simeon.*

See also NOTICEABLE TOPICS.

Vers. 5, 6. *Theme:* THE HEATH IN THE DESERT. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

The Jews had withdrawn dependence from God, and trusted to themselves and Egypt. They were delivered to the Babylonians. To this the text refers primarily. But it may apply to all.

Two definitions of a heath. A shrub growing in barren places, and a sandy barren plain of Arabia seldom rained upon. These plains and the shrubs they produce do not "see when good cometh." The trees of Canaan by the rivers are refreshed by nightly dews. God's vineyard is as a watered garden, and yields the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley, but the wastes of Arabia, doomed to barrenness, never "see when good cometh."

I. **Let us learn against whom this curse is denounced,** and trace resemblances between them and the heath, &c. *They are those who disclaim* dependence on God—idolators, infidels, and the profane.

1. *Those who do not realise their dependence on God for all true happiness,* but think it lies in worldly gain. They make no daily petition to God for it. *The prayerless, stupid, and worldly inherit the curse in the text.*

2. *Those who trust in man and make flesh their arm,* and neglect to fix all dependence on Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They do not feel they are hopeless and helpless, or they would cast themselves upon Christ as the only hope of sinners; they are therefore under the curse against those who trust in man.

3. *There is yet another class under this curse.* Some are in the Church; some are not. Punctual perhaps on ordinances, they depend upon a form of godliness without the power, and, excepting a little animal sympathy, remain cold as ever. They are a numerous class even in the Church of Christ. "Five were *wise*, and five were *foolish*."

II. **How do these resemble the heath in the desert?**—the prayerless, stupid, and worldly.

1. *In barrenness and deformity.* God gave them powers to bear fruit, but He comes year after year and finds nothing, and worse—a crop of misshapen shrubs. After so many benefits, they refuse to serve Him.

2. *They are like the heath in being desolate, forsaken, and unblest.* No voice of joy or song is heard on the heath, while those who wait on God are refreshed like Eden. Those who are like the heath in barrenness and deformity shall resemble it in desolation and woe.

3. *While the holy land is refreshed with dew from heaven, the desert remains parched* as before. This feature of resemblance exists at this time. Showers of grace fall on some, but the barren sands know not "when good cometh."

4. *Showers falling on desert heath only promote the growth of deformed shrubs;* and the influence of heaven falling on this class calls forth a more fatal resistance of the Holy Spirit.

5. *The heath cannot be made fruitful, and all God's visitations fall unregarded* upon many.

6. It is plain that, *while many obey the Gospel call, others remain desolate* and uncheered by any heavenly influence.

7. *Some of the awakened may say,* "*I cannot* change my own heart; I do the best I can"—Do you? even for a day? Drop these excuses, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

8. *Others resemble the heath in deformity and barrenness.* They resort to sacraments, but yield no fruit, and so will they remain till death.

APPLICATION—

(*a.*) *I address those who cast off fear and restrain prayer.* Waste not out, I pray you, your life, seeking independent happiness. Return and seek happiness in God alone, and become rich for *eternity.*

(*b.*) *I warn you who are awakened.* Trust not in ministers or Christians. Only Christ can give the mighty blessing. Let Calvary's Voice draw you to Him.

(*c.*) I speak to those *who think they love God* better than father, mother, or life, yet are chained to earth—these are the most discouraging of all men. It is easy to alarm the humble, but a task to destroy false hopes.

(*d.*) Let the dear loved children of God receive the precious promises succeeding the text: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the *Lord is.*"—*Edward Griffin, D.D.*

Ver. 7. *Theme:* MAKING GOD OUR TRUST.

Man, sensible of his weakness, requires for his happiness some object without himself in which he can trust. In what do men trust? God alone furnishes an object adequate to the requirements of our trust. All lesser objects are frail, variable, uncertain.

I. **The soul's right and only trust.**

1. We owe it to the supremacy of the divine nature.

2. Entire resignation to God's wisdom and will.

3. Entire withdrawal of our trust from all inferior things.

4. Sincere acceptance of Christ as our Saviour.

5. Sincere effort to live a holy and pious life.

II. **The blessedness with which godly trust is crowned.** This will be seen in the following contrast of believer and unbeliever.

1. The objects of the unbeliever's trust are uncertain and insignificant; the believer's, certain and glorious.

2. The one inadequate and perishing, the other all-sufficient and abiding (1 Pet. i. 4).

3. The one bears a burdened conscience and a character ill at ease, the other enjoys peace and rest (Matt. xi. 28–30).

4. The one regards God as his foe, and resembles the inferior objects of his trust; the other regards God as his friend, enjoys His protection and fellowship, and resembles Him.

Learn—

1. Not to be deluded by inferior things.

2. Seek this blessing by submission to God's will in a crucified Saviour.—*E. Jerman.*

Comments—

"Blessed are those teachers, who have

betaken themselves to His protection, who once promised His Church that even the gates of hell should not prevail against it. Who has ever been put to shame who trusted in Him?"—*Zinzendorf.*

Ver. 8. *Theme:* VERDURE IN THE MIDST OF DESOLATION. "He shall not see when heat cometh."

Nothing in nature more admirable than the strange and unlikely circumstances in which we often see plants and trees retaining their sap and verdure, and manifesting the most luxuriant fruitfulness. By a wonderful instinct of their nature, they adapt themselves each to their appointed place, and thus continue to live and flourish abundantly where another would perish in an hour. No natural influence more fatal to vegetable life than extreme drought; yet, even that in some favoured instances may prove innocuous. Some plants and trees "do not see when heat cometh, but their leaf is green," &c.

This beautiful fact the prophet transfers from the natural world to the spiritual by way of illustration and analogy. There, too, often verdure appears in midst of desolation—life in midst of death. True happiness and true holiness depend, not on outward advantages, but on inward state.

Let us consider further this interesting and instructive phenomenon.

I. **The fact itself.** Meets us everywhere in the natural world. So also in the kingdom of *grace.* Spiritual health depends not alone or mainly on our circumstances, but on the temper and state of our souls. In the cottage, the palace; in want, in affluence; in retirement, on busy Exchange; in youth, in age; in health, in disease and sickness, God's Enochs have "walked with God." Every situation not *equally* favourable to soul's life, but none *utterly* unfavourable; *e.g.*, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Caleb, Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, and others, are witnesses to this truth. Look, then, *within* for source of weakness, decay, low spiritual state.

II. **The explanation.** The man "trusteth in the Lord, and his hope the Lord is."

1. *He lives in constant believing communion with God.*

2. *He improves what advantages he possesses.* They may be few, but he aspires after and improves them. If Jesus is "passing by," he, like Zaccheus, will be on the sycamore-tree.

3. *He retains the good he receives.* Careful to retain the fruits of opportunities after they are gone. Those who make rich are not only they who get much, but who keep what they get.

4. *He sedulously improves and turns to account the grace he has.* The surest way alike to confirm and to strengthen any holy principle is to carry it into action. Talents are increased by trading. The idle Christian is a feeble, drooping, pining Christian.

Such is the secret of a holy, happy walk with God, in any times and in the worst times. Get truly planted by the waters of salvation, and your roots stretched out by the rivers of God.—*Rev. Islay Burns, Dundee:* "Family Treasury," 1859.

Comments—

"The Musorites changed the word FEAR into 'shall not *see* when the heat cometh,' in order to make it correspond with ver. 6. But the change is not merely unauthorised, but meaningless. God's people see the heat when it comes; they feel trouble as much as other people, but they *do not fear it*, because they know—

"i. That it is for their good, and

"ii. That God will give them strength to bear it."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"The servants of God are planted, as it were, in a moist soil, irrigated continually by streams of water. The prophet intimates that *God's children are not exempt from adversities:* the 'heat cometh,' and they feel the heat of the sun, being, like trees, exposed to it; but moisture is supplied, and the juice diffuses itself through all the branches. Though they feel great heats as well as the unbelieving, for this is common to both, *God's children shall yet be kept safe:* there is a remedy for them—their root

has moisture. The word rendered '*see*' רָאָה, *dag*, means to fear and to be careful; also to grieve, and so some render it here, *It will not grieve;* but the better meaning is, It shall not be afraid of heat."—*Calvin.*

Ver. 9. *Theme:* THE FALSITY AND FOULNESS OF MAN'S HEART.

The Bible reveals what man would have failed to discern, that the heart is the root of character, the seat of the moral quality attaching to the thoughts and actions of men. This truth, plainly taught in Scripture, accords with reason, and finds irrefutable proof in man's career. There are three aspects of the heart here suggested :—

I. **Surpassing deceptiveness.** "Deceitful above all things."

1. *Its cruel delusions.* It often *prompts* a man to evil, promising joy and reward, then leaves him befooled by his desires; allures him to follow passion, then leaves him to the tortures of conscience; assures him of courage in difficult hours, then, at the crisis, leaves him trembling in fear, &c. It flatters its dupes; is a false syren.

2. *Its religious frauds.* Fosters hypocrisy in the superficial, urges men to assume a religious profession, and walk as if God were being reverently served; and then, in secret, craves and impels towards hidden vice and subtle indulgences. Flatters a man into a belief in his own goodness when life is pleasant and easy; and then, in death, mocks and chides him for his sin.

3. *Its supreme falsity.* "Above all things." Above the *desert mirage?*—Yes. Above *gold?*—Yes. Above *pleasure?*—Yes. Above fickle beauty?—Yes. For the heart is the *cause* of all deceits; it supplies the fantasy in us which makes the illusion possible.

II. **Malignant guiltiness.** "Desperately wicked."

1. *Its action in the region of common life.* To what detestable iniquities would it impel men! Judge of this by considering the filthy, atrocious, idolatrous customs and social habits which prevailed in Oriental scenes. Where the passions are left unrestrained by civilisation and religion, what a foul life is man's! Nearer home: what revolting, sensual, brutal careers men live amongst us where neither fear of God nor regard of man rule! What are the furious schemes of the assassin, the usurper, the traducer, the felon, the adulterer, but illustrations of the heart's unbridled lusts! "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders," &c.

2. *Its action in the sphere of religion.* We expect of the heart that it *responds to love;* but how does it respond to "the great love wherewith God hath loved us"? How does it keep outside its closed doors Him who long has knocked there in vain, yet "who first loved us"? And after having avowedly, in discipleship of Christ, given Him our heart, how does "an evil heart of unbelief" lead us to "depart from the living God," and urge us by fervent cravings to fall back into sin!

III. **Profound inscrutableness.** "Who can know it?" Having used the strongest language to describe it, yet words fail to tell its depths of iniquity.

Looking on the loathsome sights of vice, squalor, villany, and woe around us, and asking, "Whence came these?" Christ replies, "*Out of the heart.*" The heart's wilfulness "brought death into the world, and all our woe." It still can prompt brutal cruelty to requite tender love; it still stirs the lascivious to decoy innocence into ruin worse than death, &c.

"Who can know" *his own heart?* We cry, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" yet we do it, and worse far.

"Who can know" *the hearts of others?* *Is there a bound* which the heart's impulses will not pass? Is there a thought, at whose horribleness the mind staggers, and of which we exclaim, "Surely, it could never be that a man is capable of it!" Yet greater enormities are being wrought: cold-blooded, sinister, vengeful, devilish! "Who can know it?"

If this be so *between man and man,* oh, how shall we fathom the depths of man's great criminality to *God*—slaying His Son; to *Jesus*—"crucifying Him

afresh and putting Him to open shame;" to the *Holy Spirit*—"grieving the Holy Spirit of God"!

(*a.*) *Do you think this description exaggerated?* But this is the deceitfulness of your heart, flattering you that you cannot be so bad, or are not so bad as others.

(*b.*) *Should not this urge you to self-abasement before the Cross?* Boasting no more your self-righteousness, and hastening to the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, crying, "Create in me a clean heart," &c.

See *Addenda* on vers. 9 and 10. FALSITY OF HEART, and SEARCHING THE HEART.

Theme: THE HEART'S DECEITFULNESS TOWARDS ITSELF.

There is great deceit in the dealings of men in the world, in their counsels and contrivances, in their private and public affairs, in their words and actings; the world is full of deceit and fraud. But all this is nothing as compared with the deceit in a man's heart *towards himself* (for that is the meaning of the expression here), and not towards others.

This deceitfulness of the heart, whereby it is exceedingly advantaged in its harbourings of sin, lies chiefly in two things: that—

I. It abounds in contradictions, so that it is not to be dealt with on any constant rule.

The frame of the heart is ready to contradict itself every moment. None know what to expect of it. Facile now, then obstinate; open, then reserved; gentle, then revengeful.

This *ensues from the disorder wrought upon our faculties by sin.* God created all in perfect harmony. The mind's subjection to God was the spring of the orderly and harmonious motion of the soul. This being disturbed by sin, the rest of the faculties move cross and contrary one to another; the will chooseth not what the mind discovers good, the affections delight not in what the will chooseth, &c.

II. Its deceit lies in its full promisings upon the first appearance of things.

Sometimes the affections are wrought upon, and the whole heart appears in a fair frame, and all promises well: suddenly all is reversed. Who can mention the treacheries which lie in the heart of man? *Uncertain in what it doth; false in what it promises.*

1. Never let us think our work, *in contending against indwelling sin*, is ended. The place of its habitation is unsearchable. There are still new stratagems and wiles to be dealt withal. Many *conquerors* have been *ruined by their carelessness after a victory.* David was so. Many decline into sin in old age: they gave over the task of mortifying sin before their work was at an end.

2. The fact that the heart is inconstant calls for *perpetual watchfulness.* An open enemy, that deals by violence only, always gives some respite; but against adversaries that deal by treachery nothing but perpetual watchfulness will give security. The heart hath a thousand deceits, and if we are the least off in our watch we are sure to be surprised (Prov. xxviii. 6).

3. *Commit the whole matter therefore to Him who searcheth the heart.* Here lies our safety. There is no deceit in our hearts but He can disappoint it. David takes this course (Ps. cxxxix. 8, 9, 10, 23).—*Dr. John Owen.*

Theme: THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART. "*The heart is deceitful above all things*" (Jer. xvii. 9).

I. Men impose on themselves respecting their own character. The heart practises deception in regard to its natural tendency and disposition.

1. *Men do not attribute to themselves the character given of the human heart in the Bible.* The Christian does.

2. *Is it not possible that your heart deceives you?* If the Bible be true, there is no such native excellence of character as you suppose that you possess. Multitudes who once had the same view of themselves have been convinced of their error.

3. *Nothing easier than self-deception.*

II. Men deceive themselves in regard to their real attachments.

III. The heart is deceitful in regard to its power of resisting temptation.

IV. In its promises of reformation and amendment.

IMPROVEMENT—

1. *There is a danger of losing the soul.*

2. *You have a heart which is not to be trusted.*

3. *Wake from all delusions to the reality of your condition.* — *Albert Barnes.*

Theme: DECEITFULNESS OF MAN'S HEART.

Nothing so mean as deceit. The text calls attention to the deceitfulness of our hearts.

I. A difficult subject to deal with, because—

1. The examination is made by the guilty party into his own character.

2. Nothing more humiliating and painful to man's pride.

II. No deception like that of the heart. The garden—the cornfield—the mercantile speculation—the youth—may promise well and deceive, but the heart is deceitful above all.

1. It is the fountain of deceit.

2. Deceives its owner and best friends often.

3. Its deceit is in a very large measure voluntary.

4. Its deceitfulness is insidious in its growth.

5. Will be terrible in its consequences. Its possessor is travelling in a dangerous path, but fancies all well. His character is being fixed in evil. The future must be terrible in the circumstances of its misery, and its disappointment and despair.

III. The examples of Scripture bear this out. Old prophet, 1 Kings xiii. 11–18; Gehazi, 2 Kings v. 22–27; Hazael, 2 Kings viii. 7–15; Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. 5–10.

IV. The heart deceives its possessor continually. With regard to—

1. Its motives. 2. Its inclinations. 3. Its safety amidst temptations. 4. Its power of reformation.

Learn—

1. To distrust and watch it. 2. To trust in Christ and His word.—*E. Jerman.*

Theme: THE HEART'S DECEPTIVENESS AND WICKEDNESS.

This truth is not difficult to illustrate and prove. It requires no penetrating genius to bring it up from the depths. As illustrative of—

I. The heart's deceptiveness, we point—

i. *To the mistakes into which it falls relative to religion.* Scripture declares it "the one thing needful"; the heart deems it not needful at all, or only of secondary consequence. Or, if it heeds religion, it mistakes its forms for the reality of Christianity.

ii. Further apparent *in its pursuit of pleasure.* The Source of true happiness is God; but the heart supposes that pleasure must be found in things seen and temporal. "A deceived heart has turned them aside."

iii. Still further seen in the fact, that *God has not left it to be its own guide.* A Law has been given for its conduct, and a Gospel for its faith, while "line upon line," &c., has been added to guide its commonest actions. The ant wants no guide, for its instincts are safe and sufficient. But the heart's tendencies are wholly untrustworthy.

iv. Further proved by the declaration of the Lord, that *the heart must be renewed.* The mariner when voyaging never thinks of changing his compass, knowing that the one he has is faithful and true. But man's heart is so wrong that a new heart is demanded.

But the *heart is not the only deceitful thing in the world:* other things are deceitful, *though* NOT EQUALLY SO. "The heart is deceitful *above all things.*"

It surpasses all other things in two particulars—

1. *In its extent.*

2. *In its fatality.*

Other things may deceive a *few* men, this deceives *every* man. Other things may so deceive as to ruin man's temporal interests; this *ruins man's eternal* interests.

II. The proof of the heart's wickedness is equally easy:

i. It is *at enmity with God*—the best and most gracious of beings.

ii. *Utterly opposed to the holy law of God;* ignores its claims, &c.

iii. *Sternly rejects the Gospel;* flings aside God's greatest Gift, and costliest Sacrifice.

iv. *Wilfully disregards the warnings and threatenings of God.*

v. Notwithstanding all the culture the heart receives from education, preaching, and literature, it *brings forth nothing but the briers and thorns of unrighteousness.*

vi. Its desperate wickedness is further seen in *the fearful punishment* with which its wickedness will be visited. The "undying worm," the "unquenchable fire." Only greatest criminals are punished with direst punishments.

1. As this truth rests upon Divine testimony, *to deny it is to make God a liar,* and *prove the heart's self-deceivings.*

2. How *different is the new heart* from the old! "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."—*Rev. D. Pledge.*

Theme: THE HEART INSCRUTABLE. "Who can know it?"

It is extremely difficult for sinners to know their hearts.

I. What is implied in their knowing their own hearts?

It implies: 1. A knowledge of their *selfishness.* 2. Of their *desperate incurable wickedness.* 3. Of their *extreme deceitfulness.*

II. Why is it so extremely difficult for them to know their own hearts?

Because: 1. They are *unwilling to know them.* 2. *Because of the deceitfulness of sin.* They love or hate, as they appear friendly or unfriendly to their cherished feelings,—(*a*) God, (*b*) Christ, (*c*) good men, (*d*) the world, (*e*) their own hearts, (*f*) the means of grace, (*g*) their convictions, (*h*) heaven.

III. Application—

1. The only way to know the heart is to inquire whether it loves God or not.

2. Saints can more easily ascertain their true characters than sinners can.

3. All changes of life are trials of the heart.—*Emmons.*

See also NOTICEABLE TOPICS on the HUMAN HEART.

Ver. 10. *Theme:* GOD'S RULE OF JUDGMENT. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

None but God can explore the depths of iniquity in the human heart. As He will judge the world at the last day, He must have access to the inmost recesses of the soul, and be able to bring forth to judgment all its hidden abominations.

Accordingly God is employed noticing and recording everything, that He may then reward "every man according to his ways." We here see—

I. The preparation God is making for the future judgment. God is not an unconcerned spectator of what is done upon earth.

1. *He continually marks the ways of men.*

(*a.*) All their *actions* He observes, according to the principles from which they proceed, and the ends for which they are done.

(*b.*) Our *words,* also, and our very *thoughts* (Ps. xi. 4, Prov. xvi. 2).

Hezekiah evinced the *mixture of motives and principles* which lay behind actions (2 Chron. xxxii. 31); and these need to be analysed and distinguished. God "tries the reins," as a philosopher assays gold.

2. *He records everything in the book of His remembrance.* The *thoughts* as well as the words of men (Mal. iii. 16). All will be educed in the judgment (Job xiv. 17). Nothing escapes His attention; certainly not any "good thing" eludes His sight (1 Kings xiv. 13).

II. The rule by which the judgment shall be determined.

1. *The sentence will be according to every man's works* (Gal. vi. 7, 8; 2 Cor. ix. 6).

2. *Rightly understood, this strongly declares the equity of God's future judgments.* Everything that can affect the quality of an action will be taken into account.

Behold then—

i. What an awful prospect is here opened to the ungodly!

ii. What an encouragement is here afforded to the righteous!

Moses looked to "the recompense of reward." Paul anticipated "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—*Chas. Simeon.*

Theme: GOD'S INTEREST IN MAN.

I. Respects "Fruit" in men's lives.

II. Deals with men "according to Fruit."

III. Where Fruit is to be found—(in the heart).

IV. The Search for Fruit.—*J. Farren.*

See *Addenda:* SEARCHING THE HEART.

Comments—

Ver. 11. "**As the partridge hath** gathered eggs which it laid not." Epiphanius says: "The partridge is not satisfied with the fruit of her own womb, but steals the eggs of other birds and carries them to her nest" (Phisiol. 9).

"This notion might easily be taken for the great number of eggs which the partridge lays. Another interpretation is given by Hippolytus, who says that 'the partridge calls to it the young belonging to other broods, and gathers them under its wings, but when they hear the cry of the true parent they leave the false one.' The general sense is that the covetous man is as sure finally to reap only disappointment as the partridge which piles up eggs not of her own laying, and is unable to hatch them."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"As Jehoiakim is described by Jeremiah as a covetous tyrant (chap. xxii. 17), and as he died at the age of thirty-six, he is supposed by some to be referred to in these words."—*Ibid.*

Ver. 11. *Theme:* WEALTH UNJUSTLY ACQUIRED. Violence and fraud had been reigning in Jerusalem

I. **Unlawful means used to acquire wealth may win success.**

1. Opportunities to acquire money *tempt to oppression and fraud.*

2. *A temporary prosperity is realised* in the possession of ill-gotten gains.

3. The rich toil to gather wealth, and then *sit brooding over it,* like the partridge; but it never gives comfort or satisfaction. They are always anxious and uneasy; for their sinful projects may miscarry

4. Treasures acquired by wrong methods *leave an unquiet conscience.* The rich man may say, I am innocent (Hos. xii. 8), but that only mocks his conscience.

II. **Wealth when acquired cannot long be retained.** "He shall leave them in the midst of his days."

1. *God shall cut him off by some surprising stroke* (Luke xii. 19, 20).

2. *Gathered riches cannot be taken into eternity:* "He shall *leave* them."

3. *His impoverished death shows him to be a miserable "fool."* He was "not rich towards God," only had "ill-gotten gains," and had to "leave" all in death; went into eternity "poor indeed"—"poor and miserable, and blind and naked."

III. Parting with his wealth in death is a great vexation to a worldly man.

1. *It naturally frets him* to leave to another, who may squander all, the treasures he has wasted his life in accumulating.

2. *It justly appals him* to go into God's presence with nothing but the memory of unjustly-accumulated gains. "He *shall be a fool:*" the laughing-stock of death.

Vers. 12 and 13. See HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON SECTIONS.

Theme: THE CHURCH OF THE LORD.

i. *What it is in itself.* Peace of sanctuary; throne of divine glory; house of Him who is Israel's Hope.

ii. *What it will be.* It will ever remain firm (Matt. xvi. 18).

iii. *What they find who forsake it. Shame, oblivion, unsatisfied thirsts.*—*Naegelsbach.*

Ver. 14. *Theme:* A CRY FOR HEALING AND SAVING GRACE. "*Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed,*" &c.

One great proof of the experience of converting grace is the disposition to vindicate God and condemn ourselves. "That Thou might be justified," &c. Here Jeremiah justifies divine dispensations.

I. **That sin is the disease of the soul,** and is so felt. All its symptoms

are dreaded by the Christian. The worldling does not fear nor dread them. He is like a man in consumption, whose case is seen and dreaded by all but himself. But the Christian dreads the *evil* as well as punishment of sin. He knows the plague of his own heart. All the symptoms are dangerous. Sin like a venomous disease.

There is the loss of *rest*—"no peace."

There is the *depravation of taste*—he feedeth on ashes. Want of appetite.

There is the loss of *sight*—but the Christian prays, "Open Thou mine eyes."

There is the loss of *hearing*—the wicked is like a deaf adder. But the Christian says, "*The hearing ear and seeing eye, the Lord hath made both.*"

II. That Christ is the only physician, the Good Physician. Other physicians are prodigal of the patient's blood, and sparing of their own; but Christ shed His own blood to save our souls. "*When justice calls for sinners' blood, the Saviour shows His own.*"

Never was the disease known yet that mocked His skill. The blind, the dumb, the maimed, the deaf, the very dead—owned His power; and, *behold, the Lord's arm is not shortened.* There are seasons in which nothing short of this *conviction of the infinite ability of Christ to pardon and to save* can bring peace to the mind.

i. *Consider the infinite efficacy of Christ's atonement, as showing God's readiness as well as ability to pardon.* What pledge of God's delight in mercy could He give like this, "*He spared not his own Son*"?

ii. *Consider, has not God inculcated unlimited* forgiveness on us? (Matt. xviii. 21; Luke xvii. 4.) If God requires forgiveness of us without bounds, will not He extend forgiveness without bounds?

iii. *Consider the direct statements of Scripture:* "*I, even I,* am He that blotteth out," &c.; "*All sins in depth of sea.*"

iv. *From great instances of mercy.*

III. That prayer is our only refuge. It is the appointed means. It has never failed. Your desire for the benefit of purity and pardon is a proof it shall be extended. He will fulfil desire.

IV. That praise should be our truest delight. "Thou art my praise." Our praises should be renewed, for past mercies, with prayers for new ones.—*Samuel Thodey,* A.D. 1841

Theme: PRAYER FOR SALVATION BASED UPON PRAISE. "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed," &c.

I. The blessings sought.

1. *Health.* What temporal blessing greater. The health of the soul is the highest form of health.

2. *Salvation.* (Explain the term.)

II. How they are sought. By prayer.

1. *Confession of need.*

2. *Seeking in right way;* of right source.

3. *Sincerity of prayer,* shown in use of right means to preserve health and obtain salvation.

III. The ground of the prayer for these blessings. "Thou art my praise." What does this mean but that he who rightly offers this prayer is living in the service of God, seeking to please Him, rejoicing in His favour, acknowledging His mercy?—"*The Hive,*" vol. viii., 1875.

Theme: THE PENITENT'S PRAYER. The words express—

I. An earnest desire for salvation.

II. He applies to Almighty God for it.

III. Through the medium of prayer.

IV. With confidence that He will be heard.—*Dr. A. Thomson,* of Edinburgh, from *Lange.*

Vers. 14, 15. *Theme:* A PREACHER'S CRY FOR HELP. He is tempted on account of the truth.

i. *The temptation* (ver. 13).

ii. *The demonstration of innocence* (ver. 16).

iii. *The cry for help.*

(*a.*) Negative (vers. 17, 18).

(*b.*) Positive (vers. 19).—*Naegelsbach.*

Comments—

Ver. 14. "*Thou art my praise.*" "When a teacher confines himself to the *praise of the Cross,* and lets all other matters of praise go which might adorn a theologian of these times, and adheres immovably to this: 'I am determined

not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified'—amid all the shame of His Cross, He is victorious over the rest."—*Zinzendorf.*

Ver. 15. "*Where is the word of the Lord? let it come now!*" "This taunt shows that this prophecy was written before any signal fulfilment of Jeremiah's words had taken place, and prior therefore to the capture of Jerusalem at the close of Jehoiakim's life."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

Ver. 16. "*From being a pastor.*" See *Lit. Crit.* on this verse.

"*Desired the woful day:*" *i.e.*, the day on which Jerusalem was to be destroyed and the temple burnt. Though these calamities would *verify* Jeremiah's word and *vindicate* him against scorners, yet his patriotic soul recoiled from the nearing desolation of his country and ruin of his people.

Ver. 16. "*That which I have preached was right before Thee.*" "It is not difficult to know in these times what is right before the Lord. There is *His Word:* he who adheres to this strictly, knows in this that he is right. In all this it is the teacher's chief maxim, not to make use of the application without need, but to make the truth so plain in his discourses that the hearers must *necessarily make the application to themselves.* 'Thus saying, Thou reproachest us also,' said the lawyer (Luke xi. 45). Others went away convicted in their consciences."—*Zinzendorf.*

Ver. 17. *Theme:* THE SOUL'S HOPE IN A TIME OF TERROR. "Be not a terror unto me. Thou art my hope in the day of evil."

Jeremiah had forewarned. It was a painful duty. He now looks forward to the "woful day" with deep anxiety for his people. And as one who sees the storm pending, and looks around for hiding-place, he draws near and appeals to God, sure that amid the terrors of the "day of evil" He would preserve his soul.

Our case is sadly accordant with that of Judah.

1. The *heartless rebellion of Judah* did not exceed the iniquity of many of us who have trifled with grace.

2. The *judgments pronounced* were not heavier than those standing against the impenitent sinner who despises the great salvation.

3. *The mission of the preacher* is still to rush in among men "whose hearts have departed from the Lord," and protest, warn, and call to repentance.

4. *And the consolations of the righteous* are as true as with the prophet; for he knows God is his "Hope" in the day of evil.

I. A day comes when God will be a terror. God would take from Judah all *this world's* "heritage" they prized, and all the *spiritual benefits* they failed to profit by.

"Days of evil"—

(*a.*) *Come suddenly.* Sweep down on us like unexpected storms.

(*b.*) *Find us desolate.* "While we say, Peace, peace, sudden destruction cometh upon us." When our "desolation cometh like a whirlwind," it is then *too late* to be seeking a sure refuge.

In these "days of evil," which come on the soul of the guilty, we must include—

1. *The day of the sinner's conviction and anguish.* When God *arrests* the soul and *confronts* him with his guilt. Oh, what agony! "Woe is me, I am undone!" *God* is a "*terror*" to him. "Whither can I go from Thy presence?" "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

2. *The day when death calls the guilty soul from earth.* Comes "as a thief in the night." How terrible is the death of the wicked! How the soul shudders to be hurrying before God unreconciled, unsaved!

3. *The day when the spirits of men will be arraigned for judgment.* We shall meet God! No exaggeration of facts in the description of men "calling on mountains and rocks to hide" them. God will be a "*terror*" to the guilty. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

II. In the day of terror God may be found our Hope. God is not necessarily a terror to the soul in the day of calamity. The righteous prophet knew He would be his "Hope."

1. *This is the known character of God.* He is called "the Hope of Israel" (ver. 13). See also xiv. 8. It is on this well understood character of God that the exhortation is given, "Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is forgiveness: and He shall redeem Israel from all her iniquities." God is not *willingly* a "terror" to any soul. Listen to His Name declared amid Sinai. Read Gospel statement, "God so loved the world." Watch His ways in providence: "His tender mercies over all His works." When He becomes a "terror," it is through a *dire necessity.*

2. *He will become the Hope of every soul who seeks Him.* Calls: "Turn ye to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope;" bids us "lay hold on the hope set before us." "*We* have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge," &c. Every soul may find the same.

Observe here the *way by which God is made a "terror"* (ver. 13); and the way *by which He will become as our "Hope"* (ver. 14).

3. *The confident reliance and expectation of the believer.*

(*a.*) How *unwavering* the repose. "Thou *art* my hope." David, "I will fear no evil."

(*b.*) How *personal* this appropriation! "Thou art *my* hope." (Comp. ver. 18.)

(*c.*) How *single* is the soul's trust. "*Thou* art." God *only:* God *Himself* (Ps. xci. 1, 2).

i. *Unless this Hope is ours before terror comes,* He will not be so in the day of evil.

ii. *As the day of evil is uncertain* and *may be near,* we should promptly seek the Lord (ver. 7). If "without Christ," "no hope in the world."

See *Addenda:* THE SOUL'S HOPE.

Theme: DIVINE WRATH AN OBJECT OF FEAR.

Every believer can adopt the former of these expressions, but not the latter. Why so? Words spoken in an evil time—a time of corruption, calamity, ruin. Jeremiah himself was in great danger. How appropriate then.

Notice—I. *The petition.* II. *The expression of confidence.*

I. The petition. "Be not a terror unto me."

1. God's majesty is in itself an object of fear and dread (Heb. xii. 21, Isa. vi. 5, Hab. iii. 16, Hos. iii. 5).

2. Divine chastisements are to be feared (Jer. x. 24, Ps. vi. 1, Job ix. 34).

3. God's wrath is still more dreadful.

4. The prophet prays for support and comfort in the time of trial.

II. The expression of confidence. "Thou art my Hope in the day of evil."

1. The grace exercised is hope. Though troubled, he is not destroyed. (2 Cor. iv. 8, &c.; Rom. viii. 24).

(1.) God is the object of His people's hope (Ps. lxxi. 5, lxxviii. 5).

(2.) God is the end of their hope. They need no more (Ps. xvi. 11, xvii. 15).

2. Observe the time when this grace is exercised: "Day of evil."

(1.) Sin and sorrow make every day an evil day, still let us hope (Ps. lxii. 8, lxxi. 14).

(2.) Yet there are peculiar days of evil: National calamity; reverses in business; disappointments; affliction; old age (Ps. lxxiii. 26, 2 Tim. i. 12).

LEARN—

1. That hopes and fears are blended together in the experience of the godly (Ps. cxlvii. 11).

2. If God is sometimes a terror to His own people, how much more to the wicked? (Deut. xxviii. 65–67).

From "Short Discourses," by *B. Beddome.*

Vers. 19 to end, on SABBATH CONSECRATION, see HOMILIES ON SECTIONS.

Ver. 21. *Theme:* SABBATH REST. "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath-day."

The Sabbath argument is easy to the devout. Like exhorting a hungry man to take refreshment, or a mother to love her child, or the slave to enjoy freedom.

"Welcome, sweet day of rest," etc.

The early Christians called it the Day of Light, and the Queen of Days. The ancient Church had it in great veneration. It was a badge of their religion

for when asked, "Keepest thou the Sabbath?" the answer was, "I am a Christian, and dare not omit the celebration of the Lord's day."

I. Motives for the observance of the Sabbath. There should be rest of body, with a view to the sanctity of the soul; and such a withdrawal from all worldly and sinful pursuits as may conduce to our spiritual advancement. We urge this—

1. *From the Divine command.* Twice given by God himself in Eden, twice inserted in the Decalogue, and twice engraved on stone by God and given to Moses.

2. *From the nature and reason of the case.* Intended to give opportunity of rest from toil; to be a commemoration of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God in the creation of the universe; to furnish encouragement to acquire holiness and obtain salvation. The day is needful for *rest* and *devotion*.

3. *From the blessings necessary to form a truly religious character.* Absorbed by the business and vanities of this world, the recollections of the other world would be blotted out but for the return of the Sabbath. In the absence of our usual occupations, and in seasons of leisure, conscience regains her empire, and the mind is turned inwardly upon itself, and the voice of God is heard.

4. *From the consequences of disobedience* to the claims of the day. Further from God; hardened in worldliness; left godless, and led Christless, to sink into ever-increasing alienation from all that is holy, and hopeful, and heavenly.

II. Some of the burdens which should be laid aside.

1. *The burden of needless toil* (Exod. xxxi. 15). Surely the anointing of Christ was commendable work, yet Mary Magdalene waited till the Sabbath was past (Luke xxiii. 57). God forbade manna to be gathered on the Sabbath.

2. *The burden of wilful sin.* Abstain from amusements, convivial parties, needless journeys, unprofitable conversations, &c.

3. *The burden of anxious care.* "Cast thy burden on the Lord." Do it by faith and prayer. Think—who cared for Noah in deluge, for Moses in bulrushes, for Daniel with lions, for Paul in storm?

4. *The burden of desponding apprehensions for the future.* Commit thy way unto the Lord and trust in Him. Oh, rest in the Lord, &c.—*Samuel Thodey*, A.D. 1845.

See *Addenda*: SABBATH REST.

Theme: THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY.

I. What they have in common. The weekly holyday is in both cases—

1. *A monument of the loving care of our God.*

(*a.*) For our body; (*b.*) for our soul.

2. *A right of God*, which forms a holy obligation towards—

(*a.*) God, (*b.*) ourselves, (*c.*) our neighbour.

II. The differences which distinguish them.

1. The day of Jehovah is founded on *the creation* of the perishable world; the day of the Lord is founded on the *resurrection* of Christ, as of a new, eternal world.

2. The observance of the day of Jehovah was *only legal; i.e.* (*a*) imposed by *external compulsion*, (*b*) by requirements to be fulfilled with *outward* ceremonies: the observance of the day of the Lord is to be more and more an *evangelical* one; *i.e.* (*a*) a free, (*b*) a spiritually free one, satisfying the right as well as the obligation of personality.—*Naegelsbach.*

See also NOTICEABLE TOPICS: On the *Sabbath.*

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER XVII.

Topic: THE BLESSED AND THE CURSED. (Vers. 5–8.)

Great is the *distinction* between the godly and the ungodly (Ps. i. 6, vii. 11, xi. 5) in their *characters*, in their *practice*, in their *experience*, in their *end*. This distinction will appear in the day of judgment (Matt. xxv. 34–41).

I. The characters here contrasted. Specially descriptive of the situation of Judah at the time. Threatened with invasion, they trusted in Egypt as a rival with Babylon; or in their own strength—artificial fortifications (Ps. xlviii. 12, 13); or in their individual accomplishments, as wise, rich, and powerful (Jer. ix. 23).

This may apply to us *as a nation*. We form alliances, raise armies and navies; but woe to us if we trust in them so that our heart departeth from the Lord! (Ps. xx. 6–8.)

1. *The character of the wicked is stated* (ver. 5).

(*a.*) The root of all ungodliness is *perversion of heart from God*. The sinner will not have the Lord to reign over him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

(*b.*) The wicked *trust in human means* for success and prosperity, and even for the salvation of their souls. They rely on *wisdom and skill;* on *riches* (Prov. xviii. 11), in their *fortitude and heroism*, to the *pleasurable diversions* invented; to their *actions as meritorious* for salvation.

Such procedure indicates: (1.) *Ignorance*—of God, law, themselves as depraved; (2.) *Contempt*—of Providence, and Christ's redemption; (3.) *Presumption*.

2. *The character of the righteous is stated* (ver. 7).

(*a.*) The righteous trust in the Lord *from a conviction that vain is the help of man*. They have a knowledge of the human heart that it is "deceitful above all things," &c. Self-confidence is, therefore, also abandoned.

(*b.*) They trust *in the God of salvation* alone. They can say of Christ, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

(*c.*) They trust Him *when they cannot trace Him;* know that He will do all things well; and God is their hope in all their troubles, difficulties, fears—in prospect of death and eternity.

II. The conduct determining the blessing, *i.e.*, whether we trust in man or in the name of the Lord.

1. As we trust the *wisdom* of men, or the *revealed will* of God, we are under the curse or the blessing. Some avowedly reject revelation, others admit only what accords with their own reason: the Christian takes the Scriptures.

2. As to *righteousness*, the determining question is whether we trust the righteousness of man, or the righteousness which is of God.

3. Though we trust *in the Saviour Himself*, yet if we consider Him *only as a man*, we incur the denunciation of the text. If Christ be only a man, to trust in *Him* is to trust in an *arm of flesh*. If His Divinity be denied, there is no ground for trust. (Comp. 1 Tim. i. 12, 1 John i. 9.)

III. The consequences of the conduct of these contrasted characters.

1. *As to those who trust in man.* "He shall be like the heath in the desert" (ver. 6).

(*a.*) *Barrenness.* He must remain destitute of God's fertilising and refreshing grace—unholy, fruitless, worthless.

(*b.*) *Wretchedness.* "Heath in *desert;*" "inhabit *parched places*."

(*c.*) *Loss of all good.* "Not see when good cometh." It comes in a preached Gospel, in offers of salvation, in affliction, in the testimony of conscience, in the Spirit's influence, but they *see it not!* "Good" comes *upon the Church* in the dew of heaven: "Great grace is upon them all;" upon *believers* even in their *trials*, and even when *Christ comes to judgment;* but the godless see it not, share it not.

2. *As to the righteous.* The result of trusting in the Lord is *permanent fruitfulness* (ver. 8). (Comp. Ps. i. 3, xcii. 13–15). Indicates—

(*a.*) *Enjoyment.* "A tree planted by the waters," drawing in pleasure and refreshment.

(*b.*) *Growth*, or prosperity—*progress*. The Christian flourishes, "grows in grace."

(*c.*) *Security.* "He shall not see (not *fear*) when heat cometh," &c. "He is kept by the power of God unto salvation," &c.

(*d.*) *Permanent beauty and fruitfulness.* "Her leaf shall be green, neither cease yielding fruit." Is there anything more beautiful than a Christian's life—a Christian's deeds—a Christian's death—a Christian's entrance into heaven?—Altered from "*Helps for the Pulpit.*"

Topic: DECEITFULNESS OF THE HUMAN HEART. (Ver. 9.)

Many have been the laboured panegyrics indulged, in the endeavour to establish on a firm footing the dignity of human nature. One eminent preacher has not scrupled to affirm—first, that men in general (if not every individual) are very wise; secondly, that men in general are very virtuous; and thirdly, they are very happy.

A charitable person once discovered that there was no sinner in the world but the devil. "For," was the argument, "he *forces* men to act as they do, therefore they are not accountable. The blame lights on Satan."

But whatever baptized or unbaptized infidels may say concerning the innocence of mankind, He that made man, and best knows what He has made, gives a very different account of him. He informs us "that the heart of man"—of every man born into this world—"is desperately wicked," and that it is "deceitful above all things," so that we may well ask, "Who can know it?"

I. The wickedness of man's heart. It is "desperately wicked." In considering this—

1. We have no need to refer to any particular sins. When Satan had once transferred his own self-will and pride into the parents of mankind, together with a new species of sin, love of the world, the loving the creature more than the Creator, all manner of wickedness soon rushed in. The earth soon became a field of blood. Injustice in ten thousand forms—hatred, envy, malice, blood-thirstiness, falsehood—rode triumphant, till the Creator, looking down from heaven, would be no more entreated for an incorrigible race, but swept them off the face of the earth.

2. God having created us gratuitously of His own mere mercy (for we could merit nothing of Him before we had a being), has laid us under obligation to yield Him our obedience.

3. From the devil, the spirit of independence, self-will, and pride, productive of all ungodliness and unrighteousness, quickly infused themselves into the hearts of our first parents in Paradise, and, through them, their posterity, alienating us from God, making way for idolatry, atheism, &c.

4. Melancholy truth, that all mankind now "have corrupted their ways before the Lord," unless when the Spirit of God has made the difference.

5. But if this be the case, how is it that every one is not conscious of it? For this plain reason—because the heart is not only "desperately wicked," but "deceitful above all things."

II. The deceitfulness of man's heart.

1. It is "deceitful above all things,"—that is, in the highest degree, above all that we can conceive. So deceitful that the generality of men are continually deceiving both themselves and others. Imagining themselves to be abundantly better than they are.

2. And if men thus deceive themselves, is it any wonder that they deceive others also, and that we seldom find "an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile"?

3. This is one of the sorts of desperate wickedness, which cleaves to the nature of every man, proceeding from those fruitful roots—self-will, pride, and independence of God.

4. Hence there is in the heart of every child of man an inexhaustible fund of ungodliness and unrighteousness, deeply and strongly rooted in the soul, that nothing less than Almighty grace will cure.

5. There are exceptions as to the wickedness of man's heart. "He that is born of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not." His heart is purified by faith. His wickedness is departed from him. "Old things are passed away, all things (in him) are become new."

III. Lessons—

1. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." For who that is wise would trust one whom he knows to be desperately wicked?

2. That when thou seest a man "wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him." For at what distance from wisdom must that man be who never suspected his want of it?

3. Wisdom of the caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." How firmly soever he may stand, he has still a deceitful heart. In how many instances has he been deceived already?

4. Is it not wisdom for him that is now standing, continually to cry to God, "Search me, O Lord, and prove me: Let me not think of myself more highly than I ought to think; but let me always think soberly, according as Thou hast given me the measure of faith"?—*John Wesley.*

Topic: THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH. "*Hallow ye the Sabbath day*" (ver. 22).

The awful desecration of the Lord's day which everywhere presents itself to our view, in scenes of pleasure, business, and dissipation, is at once a foul blot upon our national character, and a source of humiliation and sorrow to the sincere Christian.

The Sabbath is an institution both of divine origin and permanent obligation.

I. **The Sabbath, as a day appropriated to rest and religious duties, is an original institution, coeval with the existence of man.** (See Gen. i. 31, and ii. 1–3.) Thus the Sabbath dates its origin from the completion of creation, and was designed to commemorate that great event. This was the day God sanctified, setting it apart from all the rest. It is an original institution, as ancient as the law of love itself, and, like that law, is intended to remain in force until mortality is swallowed up of life, until the earthly Sabbath gives place to the perpetual and uninterrupted rest of the heavenly world. It is a remarkable fact, that in almost all nations men have divided time into septenary periods, or periods of seven days. Josephus says (Against Apion, book ii.) that "there is not a city of the Grecians, nor any of the Barbarians, nor any nation whatsoever, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day hath not come."

II. **That the Sabbath, when re-enacted from Sinai, was not enjoined as a temporary institution, but as a moral duty.** The law of the Sabbath holds its place among the moral precepts. (See Exod. xx. 8–11.) Engraven by the finger of God on the tables of stone, and deposited in the ark of the covenant—all indicative of its permanent character and obligation. As a moral precept, it is an original and universal duty, belonging to Gentile as well as Jew, to the Christian dispensation as well as the Levitical economy. Not a Jewish ceremony, but a moral duty, and as such cannot be set aside. Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil and honour it. Command repeated many times, is enjoined in text, "Hallow ye the Sabbath day."

III. **The Saviour has expressly taught that "the Sabbath was made FOR MAN;" and not for man in any particular nation or age, but without limitation for man; and, therefore, it is of universal and perpetual obligation.** "And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark ii. 27). "For man," as a duty incumbent upon him; "for man," as a privilege conferred upon him. Sabbath was made for all men without distinction. The Levitical law was designed to be temporary in its duration. In its extent it was confined to the

Hebrew nation, and in its duration was limited to the Jewish dispensation. But the Sabbath was not made merely for the Hebrew nation, but for man, without distinction or restriction. And now the Levitical economy is abolished, it continues a moral law binding upon the conscience of the Christian in all parts of the world.

IV. Does the Christian ask what are the obligations of the Sabbath upon him?

(*a.*) Let your mind be established with a thorough conviction of the Divine authority and obligation of the Sabbath, and let your sense of duty be based on this conviction.

(*b.*) Let your example correspond with your profession. We profess to be God's people; let us show it by our works. Our duty to God requires our observance of the Sabbath as a part of our obedience.

(*c.*) In addition to our example, our influence must be employed to promote the sanctity of the Sabbath. It is the Lord's day. As Eusebius remarks, "Before our Lord's death, it was always called the first day; but now it was called the Lord's day." To us it is, therefore, the Sabbath of the Lord our God, and it is our duty to keep it holy.—*William Cooke, D.D.*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XVII. ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. INDELIBLE RECORDS OF SIN. "The great stone book of Nature reveals many records of the past. In the red sandstone there are found, in some places, marks which are clearly the impressions of showers of rain, and these so perfect that it can even be detected in which direction the shower inclined, and from what quarter it proceeded; and this, ages ago. Even so sin leaves its track behind it, and God keeps a faithful record of all our sins."—*Biblical Treasury.*

"If you cut a gash in a man's head, you may heal it; but you can never rub out, nor wash out, nor cut out the scar. It may witness against you in his corpse; still it may be covered by the coffin or hidden in the grave; but then it is not till decomposition shall take place that it shall entirely disappear. But if you smite a soul, the scar remains; no coffin or grave shall hide it; no revolution, not even the upturning of the physical universe, shall obliterate it; no fire, not even the eternal fires of hell, shall burn it out."—*Dr. Thomson.*

Like as Queen Mary, when she died, told those about her that the loss of Calais had so impressed her, that its image would be found indelibly engraven on her heart.

Ver. 9. FALSITY AND FOULNESS OF THE HEART. "I am more afraid of my own heart than of the Pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great pope—*self.*"—*Luther.*

> "All our actions take
> Their hues from the complexion of the heart,
> As landscapes their variety of light."
> —*Bacon.*

> "A soil which breeds
> Or sweetest flowers or vilest weeds;
> Flowers lovely as the morning's light,
> Weeds deadly as the aconite;
> Just as his heart is trained to bear
> The poisonous weed or flow'ret fair."
> —*Bowring.*

"As soon as we are born and receive the care of our parents, we engage in all kinds of depravity; so much, that we seem to suck in error with our nurse's milk."—*Cicero.*

The student should specially consult "Secular Annotations on Scripture Texts," by Francis Jacox, second series, p. 122. Or, "The Heart Inscrutably Deceitful."

Ver. 10. SEARCHING THE HEART.

> "Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
> Decidedly can try us;
> He knows each chord—its various tone,
> Each spring—its various bias;
> Then at the balance let's be mute,
> We never can adjust it;
> What's done we partly may compute,
> But know not what's resisted."
> —*Burns.*

Ver. 17. THE SOUL'S HOPE. "Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as 'I imagine so,' or,

'It is likely;' but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity; our salvation is fastened, with God's own hand and Christ's own strength, to the strong stake of God's unchangeable nature."—*Rutherford.*

"*Be not a terror to me.*" Let me have fair weather overhead, however foul soever it be under foot."—*Trapp.*

"Hope is the last thing that dies in man."
—*Diogenes.*

"Though at times my spirit fails me,
And the bitter teardrops fall;
Though my lot is hard and lonely,
Yet I hope—I hope through all."
—*Mrs. Norton.*

"With eyes turned upward, whence her help descends,
Hope waits expecting till the tempest ends."
—*Holmes.*

Ver. 21. SABBATH REST. "Had not Jeremiah expressly said, 'Bear *no* burden on the Sabbath day?" Yes; but why? Because the Sabbath was an ordinance of mercy intended to protect the underlings and the oppressed from a life of incessant toil; because it was essential to save the serfs and labourers of the nation from the over-measure of labour which would have been exacted of them in a nation afflicted with the besetting sin of greed; because the setting apart of one day in seven for sacred rest was of infinite value to the spiritual life of all."—*Farrar.*

Captain Scoresby remarks, in his "Voyage to Greenland," on the good effects of Sabbath-keeping on the health and spirits of his men; "That if others who did not so sedulously keep it gained some benefits (as in fishing), we always gained extra advantage over them in course of the week. Independently of the Divine blessing, I found the restraint on the natural inclinations of the men for pursuing the fishery at all opportunities acted as an extra stimulus on their exertions when next sent after the whales. But our success, who refrained, was so much greater than those who indulged fishing, that there was not a man in the ship who did not consider it the effect of a Divine blessing."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. Early in Jehoiakim's reign (see *Chronological Note* on section 19–27 of previous chapter). Probably about two years later than that message respecting the Sabbath in chapter xxvii. 19–27. *Naegelsbach* suggests, before the fourth year of Jehoiakim. For 2, 3, and 4, see *Notes* at the head of previous chapter.

5. Geographical References.—Ver. 14. "*The snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field.*" Lebanon was called the white mountain, because of its perpetually snow-clad heights—especially Hermon's. The words should read: "Will the snow of Lebanon *cease* from the rock of the field? *Hitzig* suggests that the waters of Gihon in Jerusalem (the rock of the field, *cf.* xvii. 3, xxi. 13), which never were known to fail, were probably fed by the melting snows of Lebanon. *Henderson* is, however, nearer the interpretation: he says, The rock of the field is only a poetical expression for *Lebanon* itself; the melting snows from which supplied numerous perennial rivers. "*Shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?*" Read the words thus: "Shall the cool flowing rivers *that come from afar* be *dried up?*" which is, doubtless, another form of the foregoing idea—the streams flowing from Lebanon could not fail.

6. Personal Allusions.—(None); 7. Natural History.—(See *Geographical References, supra.*)

8. Natural Customs.—Ver. 3. "*The potter's house, he wrought a work upon the wheels:*" "The potter's field" (Zech. xi. 13, Matt. xxvii. 10) lay just beyond the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem. *Two* wheels: the lower one he worked with his feet; this set the upper wheel in motion. The lower wheel was probably stone, the upper was a flat disc of wood: on this the potter placed the clay, and, as it revolved, the potter shaped his work.

9. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 3. *A work on the wheels:* dual: *the two wheels.* Ver. 7. *At what instant:* "at what" in italics. *Lit. once.* פִּתְאֹם, adv. in the moment, forthwith: and when repeated, as vers. 7 and 9. *Now . . . again.* Ver. 8. "*I will repent.*" I repent, so also in ver. 10. Ver. 12. "*And they said, There is no hope:*" Yet *they are saying:* the consecutive perfect form of a Heb. verb implies the continuance of the action. "*Do the imagination:*" practise the stubbornness. Ver. 14. "*Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon?*" (see

Geographical Reference, supra): *lit.*, "Doth the snow of Lebanon fail from—cease to flow from—the rock of the field?" "Or shall the cool flowing streams *that come from another place*," זָרִים, *strange, foreign, i.e.*, whose sources are foreign (as 2 Kings xix. 24, so *Hitzig, Keil*, and *Payne Smith*): but *Ewald, Graf*, and *Bunsen* suggest, *that hurry along*, from זָרַר, to *press, urge, i.e.*, flowing through narrow gorges. But there is no sufficient proof that the word can have this latter meaning: the former is, therefore, better. Ver. 15. "*Because My people:*" *Yet* My people. "*Vanity and they*," &c. (see *Note* in chap. ii. 30). "*Vain gods*, and *these* have caused them to stumble." "*In their ways from the ancient paths*," &c. Or, "In their ways, the *everlasting* paths; to walk in *byeways*, in a road not cast up." Ver. 21. "*Pour out their blood by the force of the sword:*" *lit.*, "Spill them into the hands of the sword" (*cf.* Psa. lxiii. 10), *i.e.*, cast them out to slaughter. "*Put to death:*" rather, "slain of death."

HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XVIII.

Sections 1–10. The Potter's work: symbolic of God's Sovereign Power.
" 11–18. The justice of threatened ruin vindicated.
" 19–23. Imprecatory prayer provoked by hostility to God's messages.

Section 1–10. The Potter's Work: Symbol of God's Sovereignty.

"I have used similitudes." The end is a merciful one—to impress. Particularly calculated to impress. Consider—

I. **The right of the Divine sovereignty which is here claimed by Jehovah.** One of the claims most frequently urged in the Word of God—He claims from mankind an acknowledgment of His power and right to do as He pleases in the affairs of men and angels. Certainly He that formed the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land, who made all the creatures with which they are peopled, who by His power and His might sustains them, must possess both the power and the right to regulate all their affairs and all their movements. None so fit as He to govern—to choose our lot and to regulate our ways. His understanding is infinite, His power is unlimited and wonderful, and His goodness equals them both. The angels in heaven fully admit His sovereignty, and His right to exercise it. But with men it is far otherwise. Observe—

1. *This is an attribute which every man naturally denies.* Sin has thrown the foundations of the earth out of course, and hence man refuses one of the most reasonable of all claims, and one of the most important and necessary of the Divine prerogatives. This attribute is denied—

(*a.*) *In so many words.* There are the infidel deniers of Providence,—and there are the Pharisees who deny it in their creed.

(*b.*) There are still more who *deny it in practice.* What does that man do who neither courts His favour, nor fears His anger? What are you doing who at this moment refuse to obey His voice in the great matter of salvation? Think of the fallen angels—they denied it—they would not have the Lord to reign over them—they would not bend to His authority and mild dominion—and they are crushed by His vengeance. How will they face the Judge, when they wake up in the eternal world, whose authority and whose sovereignty they have denied?

2. *This is the last attribute of God received even by Christians in their real creed.* There are but few Christians who deny the doctrine in so many words; but it is one thing to profess belief on any point, and another one to believe it practically.

Hence the Armenian scheme.

Hence the Antinomian—preaching to none but saints.

Hence our gloomy discontent in affliction.

Hence our frequent departures from the directions of the Word of God.

But notwithstanding all, no attribute is more evident in its exercise than this. All creation proves it. All nature in her movements. All providence. Especially, hence we proceed to consider—

II. **The manner in which God is pleased to exercise His sovereignty towards the children of men.** The prophet, by Divine command, went down to the potter's house, where he received instructions, &c.

This is applicable to the grand and important things of eternity, and shows that man in God's hand is as clay in the hand of the potter, and that He has power over them to mould them as He pleases, and that he actually exerts that power. Observe—

1. He does what He pleases *with the penitent.* And this in every way according to mercy; yet does He act as a sovereign:

(*a.*) In *the gift of repentance:*

1. In giving it to whom He pleases.
2. In the means employed to bring them to repentance.
3. In rendering it effectual.

(*b.*) *In pardoning their sins.* "*At what instant,*" &c. In that He pardons *through His Son—freely. All sins*—past, present, and to come; and is pleased to make the pardon *known. In heaven* to his angels—they rejoice. To *the believer* on earth, and to *all the universe* in the world to come. Are you penitents? Do you desire to be such? "Ask, and you shall receive."

2. *As to the impenitent.* The purposes of heaven must stand. Barren and contradictory are the *opinions* of mankind concerning the measures of God towards this guilty world, but He pursues His own unceasing plan. Many *deny* that these judgments will ever take place,—that denial will not alter the fact. It will render them the more dreadful to the hardened infidel, because the denial increases his guilt.

Though these words mention *kingdoms*, they are equally applicable to *individuals.* And God has spoken good concerning you. Often have you heard the Gospel. But if you are impenitent—these words point to you. He will do as He pleases. You are at His mercy. What have you to expect reasonably? He *threatens to punish.* You are *not certain of His mercy.* You *must repent* or perish. But you *are in the world of hope.* Oh! then seek it. With such a prospect before me, my soul shudders for you, "knowing the terrors of the Lord," &c.—*Nameless MS. dated* A.D. 1824.

See further: *Noticeable Topics* at end of chapter; also *Addenda:* "GOD'S SOVEREIGN POWER."

Section 11–18. THE JUSTICE OF THREATENED RUIN VINDICATED.

I. God's purpose of evil avowed (ver. 11). "I am framing *evil* against you." *Evil* was in God's purposes.

II. An interval for reformation offered. "Return ye *now, every one* from his evil." Evil was in God's purposes, because "evil" was every one's way.

III. Wilful iniquity repudiates the opportunities of grace (ver. 12). There was "no hope," but only because there was no compunction for sin, and a resolve not to reform.

IV. Man's reckless guilt justifies God's anger. (vers. 13–17).

1. *Sins against grace* render our guilt more heinous than any which heathenism can furnish (ver. 13).
2. *Desertion of God* estranges refreshing comforts from the sinner (ver. 14).
3. *Substitutes chosen instead of God* mislead their dupes into desolation (ver. 15).
4. *Misery entailed by irreligion* justly awakens amazement (ver. 16).
5. *God deserts apostates* in the day of their calamity (ver. 17).

Or thus:

I. God's operations plainly tend towards the ruin of sinners. "Behold I frame evil," &c. (ver. 11). Your conduct towards God shows *you deserve it;* His dealings with you show that *He designs it.*

II. God's warnings and threatenings are invitations to timely repentance. "Return ye now," &c. God may turn from the evil He *purposes to do*, if you turn from the evil *you persistently do.*

III. Man's obstinacy towards God closes the door of hope (ver. 12). Mercy is conditional upon reformation; sinners resolve not to reform, and so court despair and ruin. See *Addenda*, DESPAIR.

IV. Immovable defiance of God is a fact of awful amazement. *Defiant impenitence* is a *startling anomaly* (ver. 13), a "*very horrible thing*" *in itself*, being self-murder; entails the *loss of all refreshing comforts* (ver. 14); shows *amazing folly*, ancient ways being deserted for byeways (ver. 15); *awakens derision* (ver. 16); and brings disconsolate ruin (ver. 17).

Section 19–23. IMPRECATORY PRAYER PROVOKED BY HOSTILITY TO GOD'S MESSAGES.

All their virulence turned itself upon God's prophet, whose righteous soul was stirred to well-nigh ungovernable wrath against his persecutors who were flagrant enemies of God and scoffers of His claims. *Matthew Henry* suggests the following homiletic divisions:—

I. See here what are the common methods of the persecutors. We may see this in Jeremiah's enemies (ver. 18).

1. They consulted together to be revenged upon him for what he had said, and to silence him for the future.

2. They pretended a mighty zeal for the Church, which was endangered by his preaching. They insinuated—

(*a.*) That Jeremiah could not be a true prophet, because neither commissioned by the priests, nor did his predictions concur with other prophets.

(*b.*) That the matter of his prophecies could not be from God, because it reflected upon the priests and prophets.

3. They agreed to do all they could to blast his reputation, "Smite him with the tongue."

4. To set others an example, they resolved not to heed anything he said; this will show others to regard his utterance merely as "*his* words," not God's.

5. That they may effectually silence him they determine upon his death (ver. 23).

II. See here what is the common relief of the persecuted. We may see this in the course which Jeremiah took.

1. He referred himself and his cause to God's cognisance (ver. 19). It is a matter of comfort to faithful ministers that if men will not give "heed" to their preaching, God will give heed to their praying.

2. He complains of their base ingratitude to him (ver. 20). To render good for good is human; evil for evil is brutish: good for evil is Christian; but evil for good is devilish.

(*a.*) See how great the evil was that they did against him: "digged a pit for his soul."

(*b.*) See how great the good was that he had done them: "I stood before Thee to speak for them."

3. He imprecates the judgments of God upon them; not from revengeful disposition, but from prophetical indignation against their horrid wickedness (vers. 21–23).

(*a.*) That their families might suffer famine.

(*b.*) That they might be cut off by the sword.

(*c.*) That the terrors and desolations of war might seize them suddenly (ver. 22).

(*d.*) That they might be dealt with according to the desert of this inexcusable sin: "forgive not their iniquity," &c.

(*e.*) That God's wrath against them might be their ruin: "Let them be overthrown before Thee."

Note:—This was not written for our imitation. Jeremiah, by the impulse of the spirit of prophecy, in the foresight of the ruin certain to come upon them, might pray such prayers as we may not. If by this example we think to justify ourselves in imprecations, we "know not what manner of spirit we are of." Christ has taught us by His example to bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us. Yet this may teach us—

i. That those who have forfeited the benefit of the prayers of God's prophets for them, may expect to have their prayers against them.

ii. That persecution is a sin that fills the measure of a people's iniquity very fast, and will bring sure destruction upon them.

iii. Those who will not be won by the kindness of God and His prophets, will certainly at length feel the resentments of both.

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XVIII.

Vers. 1–4. *Theme:* **CLAY IN THE POTTER'S HANDS.**

Suggestions: A parabolic representation impresses the mind more powerfully than simple statement or teaching. God has greater power over men than a potter over clay, for the potter is not the creator of clay, as God is of us.

I. The Almighty yet patient worker.

1. God *works.* He does not arbitrarily will and imperiously effect His purposes; but carefully *works* to realise them. God is not imperious, not arbitrary; not a mere dominating Will, but a patient Artificer, taking pains in His work.

2. God works for *definite ends.* He has a design—to form a graceful vessel. He does not make marred things by design; He purposes to make only what is beautiful—"would have all men to be saved."

II. The pliable yet perverse material. It must not escape notice that—

1. The material is *base,* unclean, unsightly. And such is the vile material from which God would make us into vessels of honour unto sanctification.

2. The material *swiftly changes form.* Easily takes new shape, for better or worse.

3. The material *works into wrong shapes* most perversely. Though the Artificer works deftly and with good instruments ("wheels"), yet man is slow to assume the "form and comeliness" God desires.

III. The various products of God's handiwork.

1. *The marred vessel.* This was *not through imperfect skill* in the Potter, but through *resistance* or *non-consistency* in the clay. In either case it would *not take* or *retain* the shape the Worker designed. "Ye have received the grace of God *in vain.*"

2. *The renewed endeavour.* "He made it again." Often, after renewed operations of God's grace, the once resistant soul yields itself unto God, and becomes "created in Christ Jesus." Then the man is "renewed in the spirit of his mind."

3. *The perfected vessel.* This perfection is the *result* which "seemed good" to the Potter, and for which He patiently worked. It is not that God forms marred things or perfect things just as it takes His caprice; no. Nothing "seems good" to Him but the perfect work.

And the *perfected result* "seemed good" to Him. He was thereby pleased and satisfied. Nothing less satisfies God: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." "He saw that all was very good" in creation. And in redemption, "Ye are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before ordained that ye shall walk in them." And the soul which fully realises His aim is "perfect before Him in love."

(*a.*) Consider the *long patience* and *careful efforts* God extends towards us in His gracious operations to form us according to His will.

(*b.*) Consider the *grace and comeliness* in us which alone satisfies Him.

Ver. 6. *Theme:* MAN'S CHANGEABLE CONDITION.

A practical homily: Nothing is fixed or certain in this world. As the clay assumes variable shapes, and passes through manifold vicissitudes, we recognise—

I. **The multiform possibilities of man.** He may become a "marred" or perfected thing; a Judas or a Stephen; a Diotrephes or a John of Patmos!

1. This in the region of social life.

2. Equally so in the realm of morality and intelligence.

3. Manifestly so in the kingdom of grace.

II. **The incertitude of worldly position.** As the wheel moves round, the whole shape and fortune of the vessel varies:

1. God can change our condition as with a touch: can cast the eminent from their elevation, can mould the imperfect into graceful forms (Psa. cxiii. 7).

2. No life is beyond God's formative touch. Judah thought herself safe against catastrophe, but God cast her down. We depend wholly on God's good-will for what we are and have.

III. **The consolation of being in God's hands.**

1. The tranquillity of faith is well founded. "He doeth according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth"—but "He doeth all things well"—and "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

2. Our condition is secure through the gratuitous goodness of God. And being all of grace, it depends on His grace that we remain in His love and care. And none that trust in Him shall be desolate.

See further: *Noticeable Topics.* THE POTTER'S WORK.

See *Addenda:* "GOD'S SOVEREIGN POWER."

Vers. 7–10. *Theme:* CONDITIONAL COVENANTS.

I. **God's providential dealings with men are conditioned upon conduct.**

1. There are *penal laws* which only act as they are violated.

2. There are *beneficent comforts*, for enjoying which harmonious conduct is imperative.

II. **The Scriptural covenants are based upon human behaviour.** Both the Old and New Testaments are called covenants: were created and given to the world on specific terms.

1. *Spiritually*, our case is *not fixed and absolute.* We may depart from our fidelity, may refuse to comply with the revealed terms on which God's love and salvation are made to depend.

2. The relationship the Scriptures set forth is dependent upon our fidelity—our compliance with Divine requirements.

III. **Individual experience is according to this conditional rule.**

1. *Specific promises* may be forfeited, and *specific penalties* incurred either in this life, accordingly as we are obedient or disobedient.

2. Our *spiritual salvation* is dependent upon definite conditions, "Repent and believe the gospel." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

3. All *Christian gladness, progress, and triumph* rest upon similar terms. We have "exceeding great and precious promises," all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus," yet only ours as we "hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

Theme: COMFORT AND WARNING. The threatenings and promises of God are given only conditionally.

i. The *comfort* consists in this, that the threatened calamities may be averted by timely repentance.

ii. The *warning* in this, that the promises may be annulled by apostasy.—*Naeg.*

Theme: HOW WE SHOULD BE MOVED BY GOD'S JUDGMENTS AND GOODNESS. That each should

i. Turn from his wickedness.

ii. Should reform his heart and life.—*Kapff*, in *Lange.*

Ver. 11. *Theme:* GOD DEVISING YET DEPLORING EVIL.

It was not *moral* evil, but physical, national. Special to Judah and Jerusalem. Yet there is a truth for all: "Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

The word "*frame*" is the same which, as a noun, means "*potter*."

I. An ominous interval — ruin is preparing.

(*a.*) The evil is not yet shaped nor ready to devastate.

(*b.*) Yet God is busily employed in devising the destruction.

(*c.*) And certainly God will not work without effect.

1. The opportunity of turning aside the evil is with us.

2. That opportunity is of uncertain duration.

3. Salvation may be found during this interval.

II. A gracious interval—God is appealing.

1. While He works out His devices of evil, He yet desires our good.

2. The devices of evil are inevitable only in consequence of man's impenitence.

3. Prompt reformation would arrest the impending doom.

4. God urges upon man the diligent use of the auspicious hour—"Return ye *now*."

Comp. Homiletic hints on chapter vii. 3.

Ver. 12. *Theme:* THE UNREASONABLENESS OF DESPAIR. "And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices," &c.

The devil's chief artifices are to produce either—

(*a.*) *False security* and presumption; or (*b*) *despair*.

I. Despair is sinful.

(*a.*) In itself.

(*b.*) Because it is the parent of other sins, as is seen in the cases of Cain, Saul, and Judas.

II. Despair is dangerous.

(*a.*) It paralyses effort after escape or reformation.

(*b.*) Allures to besotted unconcern.

(*c.*) Drives to recklessness in further wrong-doing. Thus "heaping up wrath."

III. Despair is groundless.

(*a.*) Because we still enjoy life and the means of grace.

(*b.*) Because of the longsuffering character of God.

(*c.*) Because of the universality of the scheme of redemption.

(*d.*) Because of the Person, character, and invitations of Christ.

(*e.*) Because of the many instances of final salvation.—*Payson*.

See *Addenda:* DESPAIR.

See further: *Noticeable Topics:* DESPERATION DANGEROUS.

Ver. 13. *Theme:* "A VERY HORRIBLE THING." See *Sectional Homily*, chap. ii. 9–13. "*Facts for Amazement—Reckless desertion of the Fount of Life.*"

I. It was the violation of all the lessons of experience. After having known so much of God and His grace, and tasted so much of His goodness. For in these experiences they transcended every nation.

II. It was criminality surpassing all heathen vices. "Knew the Lord's will, yet did it not."

1. Such *ingratitude* to God.

2. Such *depreciation* of precious benefactions.

3. Such *insolent disregard* of the Holy One of Israel (ver. 15).

III. It was folly of the most appalling magnitude.

1. Deserting the *cool and perennial streams*, which the pure and perpetual snows of Lebanon fed.

2. *Coquetting with delusive trifles:* "burned incense to vanity" (ver. 15).

All this is wicked, "*very horrible*," an outrage on *human nature* itself; a *violation of every law of righteousness*; a *course so iniquitous* as to ensure the most "horrible" malediction and doom!

Ver. 15. *Theme:* DESERTING ANCIENT PATHS.

i. THESE ANCIENT PATHS—

1. Were appointed by the Divine law.

2. Had been walked in by all the saints.

3. Were therefore the right way to their journey's end.

4. A safe way, being well tracked; and both easy to hit and easy to walk in.

ii. THE BY-PATHS: "a way not cast up."

1. Not the highway, the king's highway.

2. A dirty and rough way; in which they could but "stumble."

3. An iniquitous way; as is the way of idolatry and all transgression.

4. A false way; full of falls and ending fatally.—(*Comp. Henry.*)

See numerous *Homilies* on chap. vi. 16. Especially on "*The old paths*," by H. W. Beecher, whose sermon is on the two texts, vi. 16, xxviii. 15.

Ver. 17. *Theme:* THE SINNER'S DOOM. "I will show them the back and not the face, in the day of their calamity."

I. The cause of the evil threatened. The punishment of sinners is not caused by the Divine purpose alone, but in conjunction with the commission of sin. A sinner is the author of his own miseries (Jer. ii. 17; iv. 18). The children of Judah were guilty of

1. *Rejecting the Divine government.* "We will walk after our own devices," &c. (ver. 12). Mu titudes regard their own will as the rule of action, and live without God in the world (Zech. vii. 5, 6, 11, 12).

2. *Guilty of idolatry* (ver. 15, comp. Rom. i. 22, 23). Idolatry is the great sin of the human heart. Man worships his own person, his natural and acquired talents, his wealth, his honours, the creature, this evil world.

3. *Rejecting the mercy of God.* Previous to inflicting His wrath He offered them mercy (see ver. 11). But they repudiated it (ver. 12). So, "we preach Christ crucified," beseech men, &c., but "who hath believed our report?"

4. *Their conduct was characterised by the greatest folly* (vers. 13–15). Common-sense taught men to value clear waters, which, from the melted snows of Lebanon, were purified by running through the cavities of rocks, &c.; but Israel had forsaken the infinitely glorious Jehovah for worthless idols. And for what do sinners *now* part with God and holiness? Not for an equivalent, but for what dazzles and vanishes.

5. *Their conduct was a manifestation of basest ingratitude.* And so is the conduct of every sinner.

II. The nature of the evil threatened. God would abandon them. The "light of His countenance" is the joy of every soul, and of heaven; for Him to show His back is woful.

1. God sometimes shows His back in *a way of mercy* (Exod. xxxiii. 23). In compassion to our weakness "He holdeth back," &c. (Job xxv. 9).

2. But this threat is *expressive of Divine wrath.* (See Levit. xvii. 10, xx. 3; 1 Pet. iii. 12. Comp. Job xxiii. 8; Ps. lxxxiv. 14, xxii. 1.) For a moment only God hides Himself from His people; but it here means the angry abandonment of the wicked.

3. *The wrath of God is retributive.* Sinners turn their back upon God. He will "show them the back in the day of their calamity" (comp. Ps. xviii. 26, 27; Jer. ii. 27, 28, xxxii. 33–35; Deut. xxxi. 17, 18).

4. The language of the text implies *a final departure.* "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone" (Hos. ix. 12).

III. The time when the evil shall be inflicted. "In the day of their calamity."

Sometimes it may be seen *in the present life* (1 Sam. xxviii. 15; Matt. xxiii. 27).

1. In the *time of adversity.* When cold poverty is on them, where is God?

2. In *sickness.* The wicked have no refuge in distress.

3. When *deserted by their friends.* Cast off by friends, yet no God!

4. *The time of old age.* Grave opens, yet without God near thee!

5. *A dying hour.* "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."

6. *At the last day* (Rev. vi. 16, 17).

Application:

(*a.*) The awful state of the unconverted; enemies to God, and doomed to everlasting destruction.

(*b.*) If we desire to be at peace with God, the way is prepared. Reconciled through His Son.

(c.) Blessed is the prospect of all true Christians. In the day of calamity He will show them His face. "I will never leave thee."—*Helps for the Pulpit.*

Ver. 17. *Theme:* THE SINNER'S DOOM.

So inveterate was the attachment of the people of Israel to their idols, and so incorrigible amidst national calamities, that God at length determined, not only to bring upon them the threatened captivity in Babylon, but to leave them in the hands of their enemies without pity or compassion, and, like a friend aggrieved, would utterly forsake them in the day of trouble. Consider—

I. **The evil threatened: "I will show them the back and not the face."**

Here we may observe,

1. God *sometimes* shows His back in *a way of mercy*, as in the case of Moses, when He caused His goodness to pass before him because he could not see His face and live (Exod. xxxiii. 23).

2. The Lord here *threatens to hide His face. Note*—His face is either the most delightful or the most dreadful of all objects. He has an angry and a frowning face when sin is to be punished (Lev. xvii. 10; xx. 3; 1 Pet. iii. 12); and an approving smile and regard for His people (Isa. lxvi. 2). To turn His back upon His people—the Jews—in indignation and wrath. The Lord may hide Himself from His people, and be wroth; but towards the wicked it denotes His total abandonment of them to deserved wrath and punishment—particularly when the Lord says "He will show them the back and not the face." It includes—

(*a.*) The withdrawment of that *providential care and protection* which was to be the peculiar privilege of the people of Israel (2 Chron. xvi. 9), and leaving them exposed to every evil and danger. Thus He dealt with the apostate Jewish church: He broke down its wall that it might be trodden under foot (Isa. v. 5).

(*b.*) *A direct expression of His displeasure;* as when we turn our back upon those who have offended us. So Christ once turned His back upon Peter, because he was an offence to Him (Matt. xvi. 23).

(*c.*) It intimates *a final departure;* giving them up to walk in their own way, and to follow their own counsel. To be abandoned as incorrigible is the sorest of all judgments: and "woe unto them when I depart from them, saith the Lord" (Hosea ix. 12).

II. **The time when the threatened evil shall be inflicted: "In the day of their calamity."**

There is a day of trouble coming upon the wicked, an appointed day, a dark and gloomy day. Alas, if God has to turn His back, and leave the sinner to his fate! Yet such will be the doom of the finally impenitent.

1. A little of this may be seen *amidst the calamities of the present life.* What was the condition of Saul, when God had departed from him (1 Sam. xxviii.) Of Jerusalem, when He would return to His temple no more (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38).

2. What then will be the state of the wicked *in the last day*, when God shall forever disown and forever forsake them! That will indeed be the day of their calamity: there is none like it, and all entreaties will be in vain (Rev. vi. 16, 17).

Lessons—

1. Let the *unbeliever* beware, and let him well consider what he shall answer, when the Lord cometh forth to punish him (Jer. xiii. 21).

2. If a *Christian* finds himself forsaken in the day of trouble, let it cause great searchings of heart; and like Israel, let him lament after the Lord (1 Sam. vii. 2).

3. Let *all* remember there is still a refuge from the storms of life, and from the wrath to come (Prov. xviii. 10).—*The Preacher.*

Comments:

Ver. 18. "DEVICES AGAINST JEREMIAH." The effect of the foregoing prophecy upon the Jews was—

i. *A more hardened and desperate antagonism to the prophet.* "Smite him with the tongue." Carry malicious reports of what he says to Jehoiakim, and so stir his anger.

ii. *A flattering self-satisfied repudia-*

tion of his messages, "For the law shall not perish," &c.; *i.e.*, we do not need this prophet, we have the authorised "priest," the "law" of Moses, "wise" men to give us "counsel," and "prophets" to declare "the word"—not indeed the Jehovah Word, but "smooth things" (Isa. xxx. 10).

Ver. 20. "EVIL RECOMPENSED FOR GOOD."

i. *Faithful warnings and rebukes proved the prophet's patriotism.* He refused to flatter and delude. "Faithful the wounds of a friend."

ii. *Wilful love of wrong-doing rendered them hostile to truth.* "The wicked hate the righteous, and gnash upon him with their teeth."

Vers. 18–20. *Theme:* AUTHORITY ARRAYED AGAINST AUTHORITY. This appeal to the "law and priest" as against Jeremiah and his words, is used by *Naegelsbach* (in *Lange*) as the basis of a homily on the anniversary of the Reformation. Thus:—

"Opposition of the *office* which has *apparent* authority to that which has *true authority.*"

i. *The basis of the opposition.* The assertion of the infallibility of the former office.

ii. *The mode of the opposition.*

(*a.*) In not being willing to hear.

(*b.*) In the attempt to destroy the latter by violence.

iii. *The result of the opposition is nugatory.* For:—

(*a.*) The Lord hears the voice of the oppressors, to judge them.

(*b.*) He gives heed to His servants to protect them.

[This treatment of the text makes it appropriate to all occasions when secular or ecclesiastical power is invoked *to suppress the voluntary movements of Christendom;* or when *the authority of antiquity is urged against any new development of the Christian life*, whether in individuals or churches.]

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER XVIII.

Topic—THE POTTER'S WORK (vers. 1–6).

The prophet sees a man engaged in a task to which he is devoting all his thoughts. The potter designs to make some clay into a vessel of a certain shape; the form or pattern is present to his mind, he is fully resolved that the material with which he is working shall come forth *in that form and no other.*

But apparently it disappoints him. One piece of clay after another is "marred in his hands:" it takes a shape different from that which he would give it; but he goes on perseveringly till he has done the thing which he intended to do.

"O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hands, so are ye in mine, O house of Israel."

Commentators have no doubt what this means! God could do *as He liked* with the clay; He could *destroy it* if He pleased! But Jeremiah was sent to see *what* the potter liked. And he saw he desired to make a vessel of a certain form, and for that end he laboured. The analogy, if of any force or worth at all, must mean that—

I. There is a form according to which God is seeking to mould men and nations. He is not doing any single act arbitrarily, or without reference to a purpose; He is *patiently* and *continually* working for the accomplishment of this purpose.

1. Men are throughout Scripture *assumed to have wills*, upon which no mere blind mechanical power *can* operate, but upon which God, a living Person, is operating by gracious, mysterious, orderly processes, that He may make men in His own likeness.

2. Here was *the mystery of a people's repentance.* If they acknowledged this Will which was working upon them, yielded to it, and desired to be formed by it, this was the *conversion* and inward change He was seeking to produce. Marvellous that persons should see in this symbol nothing but an assertion of the sovereignty

of God, when the whole thought is the order of God's proceedings with men to produce this voluntary obedience!

II. The purpose which the potter cherished was at the last fully realised. As the prophet gazed on the potter, he saw how one piece of clay after another was *marred*, and yet how *the thing he designed was at last done*, the whole truth of the symbol came upon him with an *awful vision of what was preparing for his land;* yet also, with a *bright vision* of what must ultimately *follow the judgment.*

1. The vessel must be made, not after some different type, but *after the original and perfect life* which dwelt not in the dead matter, but in the living mind of Him who was shaping it.

2. If any particular race must be cast aside, it would not be wilfully, not in rage, but *after a series of gracious merciful experiments* had been made upon it, but because of a moral incapacity for understanding the grace of its Ruler, and for exhibiting any qualities but those most opposed to His grace, most hateful and destructive.

3. Thus the destruction which Jeremiah had foreseen to be approaching his land *justified itself to his conscience and heart.* He shrank from it through tenderness of nature, through patriotism; but he saw that one generation or another might have to be broken that the end might be accomplished.

III. Here was the power which could reform individuals and society.

1. *The strife of the clay with the Potter*, the struggles of men against a Divine Artificer not to be brought into their true, reasonable, healthy condition; not to be at peace with each other by being at peace with Him who had made them to bear a common image, were working national and individual desolation. Hence, therefore—

2. The threatened captivity and destruction would form a method of reformation; God would bring life out of death. This marring of the clay was a fearful sight; but the patience, longsuffering, and final victory of the Potter was a glorious one.

Take then this simple image of a living and righteous Being, working amidst the changes of times, working upon human wills for a loving and gracious purpose, for a purpose which has been realised, does it not give—

IV. An elucidation of facts which were left unexplained, and felt to be inexplicable?

1. *The fall of great nations;* 2. The subjection of such *portions of the kingdom of Christ* as Jerusalem, Constantinople, Alexandria, *to the power of the Crescent.*

(*a.*) Are not these cities *proofs that the clay is marred* in the new, as it was in the old time, *when it resists the will of the Artificer?* And what is there in the clay of Italy, Germany, France, England, to give it special exemption from the sentence upon that which is unprofitable? It is written, "If He spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He spare not thee."

(*b.*) But we know that whatever happens to one generation or another, *He will claim human clay and all natural things for Himself.* God has said He will write upon human hearts His own name and the name of the new Jerusalem, His holy city.

(*c.*) And for each individual, in whom dwells the Spirit of Christ, it will be realised that *the body of humiliation will be made like to Christ's glorious body* by that power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.—*Contracted from Maurice's Prophets and Kings.*

Note: "When through the clay not being of a proper consistency, or otherwise not answering to the potter's will, the vessel is spoilt, he does not throw it away, but crushes it together, dashes it back upon the wheel, and *begins his work afresh*, till the clay has taken the predetermined shape. So then, it was God's purpose that Judea should become the proper scene for the manifestation of the Messiah,

and *its sons be fit to receive the Saviour's teaching* and carry the good tidings to all lands. If, therefore, at any stage of the preparation, the Jewish nation took, in its free will, such a course as *would frustrate this purpose of Providence*, it was *crushed by affliction* into an unresisting mass, in which *the formative process forthwith began again.*"—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

Topic: DESPERATION DANGEROUS (ver. 12).

Nothing more proves the perverseness of the human heart than its unsuitable entertainment of the dealings of God with it; especially in His gracious excitements and invitations to repentance, conversion, and turning to Himself; in that these have oftentimes very little impression upon or prevalency with it. Nor only so, but now and then it proves to be from henceforth the more confirmed and settled in evil. This is the case here.

I. **A desperate conclusion.** "There is no hope."

No hope of *us;* our lusts charm and master us. No hope in regard of *thee and thy ministry;* thou art not likely to do any good amongst us. No hope of favour *from Him;* there is no probability of any mercy

i. In reference to *themselves:* despair as to their own amendment or reformation. There are people desperate in this regard, because of—

1. *An absolute indisposition and averseness to all kind of good* (Job xxi. 11). This distemper hath sundry grounds and causes from which it proceeds:—

(*a.*) A neglect of religious duties and exercises. (*b.*) A persisting in some loose course of life. (*c.*) A walking contrary to light. (*d.*) Worldliness and too deep an implunging into secular affairs.

2. *An absolute thraldom and subjection to all kind of evil.* And there are divers grounds for this also. There are people who despair of ever conquering their lusts because of—(*a.*) Spiritual laziness. (*b.*) Unbelief of God's promises. (*c.*) Carnal confidence. (*d.*) Indifference to the thing itself.

ii. In reference to *Jeremiah and his ministry:* despair as to the value of preaching God's messages amongst them. There are fortifications to this purpose, which men raise to themselves, to hold out against the workings of the ministry. 1. *Pride and self-conceitedness.* 2. *Cavillings and wranglings* against the word of the ministry (Acts xiii. 45). 3. *Prosperity and outward welfare.* It is because people are so much hardened against the ministry, that, let the prophets say what they may, they are resolved to do what they list, that there is no hope.

iii. In reference to *God Himself.* They despair of the grace of God, and call it in question:—1. From the suggestions of *Satan.* 2. From the infidelity which is in *their hearts.* 3. From a *measuring of God by themselves.*

Such a frame of spirit as this is most dangerous and pernicious.

(A.) It is against *ourselves.* (*a.*) Our grace—obstructing it and uniting evil thoughts and habits; and (*b.*) our *Comfort*—opening the soul to horror and grief.

(B.) It is against *God.* Despair is the sin which opposes Him in His main design in promulgating the Gospel, and denies "the exceeding riches of His grace" in Jesus Christ.

II. **A peremptory resolution.** "But we will walk after our own devices," &c. Consider this determination—

i. *Simply and absolutely* in itself, they declare that they will walk after their own devices.

1. There is *implied* here: That the nature of man is *very prone* and subject to "*devices*"—*evil* devices.

2. There is here *expressed:* That there is in men an *affection* towards these devices. Three things are here to be noticed—

(*a.*) *Their obstinacy and perverseness:* "We *will* walk" (comp. chap. ii. 25, and viii. 6). (1.) This obstinacy and perverseness is grounded upon security and pre

sumption (Eccles. viii. 11). (2.) It proceeds from the power which Satan has over them (Ephes. ii. 2). (3.) They are not persuaded of the truth of God's Word.

(*b.*) *Their conspiracy and combination:* "We will, every one," &c. It was a set plot and design amongst them against the Lord and His prophet. All were agreed: and this makes the sin an aggravation, as being the more malignant.

(*c.*) *Their wilful transgression and sin against knowledge:* "We will every one *do the imagination of his evil heart.*" Not we will do what in our judgment we think best; but knowing their ways were evil, they determined on "evil" still.

ii. *Reflexively and derivatively.* They *said* this—

1. Said it *expressly* in so many words: *were not ashamed to say this.* So much impudence is there upon men's spirits as that they blush not to proclaim their wickedness with open mouths.

2. They said it *practically*, in that which they did: *persisting in their evil ways*, without amendment and reformation.

Those sins which were single before admonition come to be double afterwards, and the judgment is so much the greater which waits upon them (John xv. 22). —*Rev. Thomas Horton, D.D.*, A.D. 1678.

See *Addenda:* DESPAIR.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XVIII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver 4. GOD'S SOVEREIGN POWER.

"Repine not, nor reply;
View not what Heaven ordains with reason's eye;
Too bright the object is, the distance is too high
The man who would resolve the work of fate,
May limit number and make crooked straight;
Stop thy enquiry, then, and curb thy sense,
Nor let dust argue with Omnipotence."
—*Prior.*

"God's patience is lasting, but it is not everlasting."—*Anon.*

See *Dr. Thomson's* "The Land and the Book" on this passage.

Scripture reference to "the Potter:" 1 Chron. iv. 23; Isa. xli. 25, lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 3, 4; Dan. ii. 41; Zech. xi. 13; Matt. xxvii. 7–10; Rom. ix. 21.

Man compared to "*clay*" in Scripture: Isa. lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 6.

Simeon says, in his Sermons on Rom. viii., that there were three reasons why he preached the doctrine of Election; not only because he found it in the Scriptures, but because it laid the axe at the root of (1) pride, (2) presumption, and (3) despair.

Ver. 12. DESPAIR.

Francis Spira, an Italian apostate, died in the most awful despair. On his deathbed he exclaimed, "My sin is greater than the mercy of God. I have denied Christ voluntarily; I feel that He hardens me, and allows me no hope."

"All hope is lost
Of my reception into grace; what worse?
For where no hope is left, is left no fear.
So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear.
Farewell remorse, all good to me is lost:
Evil, be thou my good."—*Satan's Address: Milton's* "Paradise Lost."

"Dreadful is their doom, whom doubt has driven
To censure fate and pious hope forego;
Like yonder blasted boughs by lightning riven,
Perfection, beauty, life, they never know,
But frown on all that pass, a monument of woe."—*Beattie.*

"Despair is the offspring of laziness, fear, and impatience; it argues a defect of spirit and resolution, and oftentimes of honesty too. I would not despair unless I saw my misfortune recorded in the Book of Fate, and signed and sealed by necessity."—*Collier.*

CHAPTER XIX.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—See notes to preceding chapter for *Chronology*, &c. *Vide* also Introductory Notes to chap. xx.

Geographical References.—Ver. 2. "*Valley of the Son of Hinnom,*" *cf.* note on chap. ii. 31. "*The East gate,*" margin the *Sun* gate. But the word is not definite; שַׁעַר הַחַרְסוּת. *Jerome, Keil,* and *Henderson* suggest the *Pottery* gate as the true rendering from חֶרֶס. The word *Harsuth* occurs nowhere else, and probably is derived from the fact that the refuse from neighbouring pottery works lay about there. The *Targum* and *Kimchi* render it *dung* gate. But the word *Harsith* occurs in the Talmud for potter's clay. The situation of the Pottery gate cannot be determined, but plainly it opened into the Valley of Hinnom (Josh. xv. 8). "The potters there formed vessels for the use of the Temple, which was close by (*cf.* ver. 10–14; chap. xviii. 2; Zech. xi. 13")."—*Jamieson.* Ver. 5. "*High places of Baal:*" *cf.* chap. vii. 31. Ver. 11. "*Bury them in Tophet:*" *cf.* Notes, *Geographical* and *Personal,* on chap. vii. 31.

Personal Allusions.—Ver. 1. "*Ancients of the people and ancients of the priests.*" The Sanhedrim was composed of seventy-two elders, taken partly from the priests (2 Kings xix. 2) and partly from the other tribes (Num. xi. 16; Josh. vii. 6; 1 Kings viii. 1), and thus represented the nation. This great council presided over the ecclesiastical and civic affairs of the whole people.

Manners and Customs.—Ver. 5. "*Burn their sons with fire:*" *cf.* chap. vii. 31. Ver. 13. "*Houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense.*" On the flat roofs of Oriental houses festivals were held (Judges xvi. 27), booths were erected at feasts (Neh. viii. 16), sacrifices were offered to the sun and planets (2 Kings xxiii. 11, 12; Jer. xxxii. 29; Zeph. i. 5).

Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 1. "*A potter's earthen bottle.*" The bottle was a flask with a long narrow neck, and called בַּקְבֻּק from the gurgling sound made when being emptied. Ver. 7. "*I will make void.*" The word בַּקֹּתִי, is used playing upon the symbol-word בַּקְבֻּק; the root of both words being בָּקַק, *to pour out.* Ver. 8.—"*Desolate*"—an astonishment. "*Plagues thereof:*" lit. blows: plague being here used because regarded as a "blow" direct from God's hand. Ver. 11. "*And they shall bury them in Tophet,*" &c.—these words, and to the end of verse, are omitted in the *Septuagint* and by *Hitzig,* as interpolated from vii. 32. Ver. 13. "*Defiled as the place, of Tophet:*" lit. shall be *the defiled.* The better rendering is (as *Targum* and *Speaker's Com.*) *shall be as the defiled Tophet:* or lit., shall be as the place *Tophet, the defiled.*

HOMILETIC OUTLINE ON THE ENTIRE CHAPTER XIX.

Vers. 1–15.—A SYMBOLIC PROPHECY OF DOOM.

God bids His prophet attempt to impress this obdurate and heedless people with another enacted symbol, which was derived again from the *potter's craft.* This time the symbol assumes a more alarming form.

1. The potter's work *is here completed;* the vessel is in this instance formed; in chap. xviii. it was a vessel in the process of being moulded.

2. The destructive work *is here irremediable.* In the former symbol the clay was worked again and again till perfected; here the vessel, being completed and baked, is *incapable of being reshaped,* and is hopelessly shattered, destroyed, and abandoned.

What are the different meanings of these two pottery symbols?

1. The patient working upon the clay, crushing the ill-formed vessel, and skilfully remoulding it till a perfect vessel was obtained, symbolised *the Divine process of formation* by which God was moulding *a people whom He would not abandon* till His *design in them was realised.*

2. The absolute shattering of the potter's bottle now symbolises the *complete destruction of that generation* of the Jewish people, as *useless for God's purposes* and contrary to His mind. This vessel, having been baked, could not be formed anew, was *beyond reformation,* and so must be destroyed.

This prophetic enactment arranges itself into three stages—

I. The solemn exhibition of the doomed vessel.

1. *The appropriate spectators* "Ancients of the people and ancients of the priests." They represented the entire tribes, and so did the potter's bottle: it was a symbol of that existing generation. The vessel which was typically used was not an *unfinished* piece of clay, but a bottle completed and duly hardened; and these "ancients" represented a nation whose usages and temperament were fixed and determined.

2. *The scene of its exhibition.* "The pottery gate" (see *Geog. References, supra*). The place where refuse was cast. That gate, opening into the valley of Ben-Hinnom, looked out upon the scene where *this people had broken every law of God.* Loathsome memorials of the nation's vile criminality lay before these "ancients." It thus justified the doom about to be pronounced, *God would break them in pieces.* Around their feet, moreover, as they stood "at the entry of the gate," lay *shattered fragments of pottery;* suggestive of the "*evil*" (ver. 3) God would "bring upon this place" and people; and the *degradation* also which impended.

3. *The explanatory message of woe.* (*a*) All classes were included in the coming woe (ver. 3); (*b*) the doom would excite general amazement—"Ears tingle," (vers. 3, 8); (*c*) yet the justice thereof was manifest (vers. 4, 5); (*d*) and the ruin would be absolutely desolating and complete (vers. 6–10).

II. The irremediable shattering of the vessel.

1. *The violent method of its destruction.* (*a.*) Not by accident but *by design it was broken. God intended it; man performed it;* and it was accomplished *with violence.* (*b.*) It was *completely shattered.* So shall Jerusalem—people and city, the entire generation—be broken to pieces; none, nothing spared. (*c.*) The destruction was *easily and irresistibly effected.* They would be powerless to avert the ruin. All "the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem" (ver. 7) would have no utility in striving to thwart God's purpose on this "vessel of wrath fitted to destruction." (*d.*) *No ingenuity could repair the ruin:* "cannot be made whole again." How dreadful is God's work when He destroys! "None can stay His hand, nor say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

2. *The suggestive scene of its destruction.* Josiah had swept all the impurities of the nation into the valley of Ben-Hinnom. It was a scene of desecration and doom. The two things were connected—*desecration* and *doom.* And this people had become a desecrated people; therefore should they fall in execrable scenes. Loathsome as Tophet was, it would become more horrible still as "the valley of slaughter" (ver. 6). The bearing of the case is this, *sin explains man's destruction:* Tophet testified against the *nation's violation of God's claims:* Tophet would witness *violence upon the offenders:* "they shall bury them in Tophet till there be no place to bury them" (ver. 11).

III. The reiteration of doom in the temple court.

1. *Proclaim to a larger audience.* "All the people" (ver. 14). In this assembled the greatest crowd (2 Chron. xx. 5). Thus would the solemn predictions, founded upon the symbolic action in Tophet, gain currency over the entire country. None could therefore plead ignorance as an excuse. Nor can we. The doom of iniquity is known—"there is no speech nor language where the voice is not heard."

2. *Uttered within the very house of God.* Where messages of grace had often been delivered. But "judgment must begin at the house of God." Men must not think to escape the denunciation of sin in God's house.

3. *Pronounced upon all transgressors.* It was not Jerusalem, "this city," which alone had sinned, but "all her towns." Sinners would gladly pass over on to others the crimes God denounces: but here all are included. For in every instance there had been *wilful rejection of God's Word:* "they have hardened their necks that they might not hear My words." What need have we to pray to be kept from like "hardness of heart and contempt for God's Word and commandments!"

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1. The "*earthen bottle*" was a humiliating symbol of

i. Their mean origin (Gen. iii. 19; Isa. li. 1).

ii. Their frail existence (Deut. xxvi. 5; see *Homilies* on chap. xviii. 4, &c.).

Comments—

Ver. 3. "*O kings of Judah.*" Spoken in the plural, because the message (vers. 3–9) related not specially to the reigning king, but to the whole royal house. No king of David's line was henceforth to sit upon the throne till He came whose is the true kingdom (John xviii. 37).—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 4. See *Homily* on chap. xviii. 15.

Vers. 5, 6. These verses repeat chap. vii. 31, 32. *Vide Notes* and *Homilies.*

Ver. 7. "*I will make void,*" *i.e.*, "I will pour out" (see *Lit. Crit.* on verse). *Neumann* suggests that Jeremiah carried to Tophet the bottle full of water, the Oriental symbol of life (Isa. xxxv. 6, xli. 18), and at these words *emptied it* in the presence of the ancients.

Ver. 8. See chap. xviii. 16.

Ver. 9. A description of the siege, (comp. xviii. 21). For the fulfilment see Lamentations ii. 20, iv. 10.

Vers. 10–14. *Theme:* THE POTTER'S VESSEL BROKEN IN TOPHET.

The scene of the people's sin will also be the scene of their punishment. In the time of the good king Hezekiah, Tophet was the place in which the army of Sennacherib perished, when Jerusalem was delivered in consequence of the prayers and the faith of the king. (See Isa. xxx. 33, xxxiii. 4, xxxvii. 36).

This place, signalised by the merciful intervention of God in favour of Jerusalem, was afterwards polluted by idolatry. (See chap. vii. 31, 32; 2 Kings xxiii. 10.)

I. **The earthen vessel broken in Tophet.** That vessel was *typical of Jerusalem*, which should thus be destroyed.

Its *destruction in Tophet* was accompanied by the declaration that the place of their idolatry should be the *scene of their slaughter.* The inhabitants of Jerusalem would be slain by the Chaldeans, and the scene of their idolatrous worship be defiled by their carcases, for there would be no sufficient place to bury them. Comp. vii. 32.

II. **Judas Iscariot perished in the potter's field** That traitor was *typical of the Jewish nation;* symbolising its rejection of Christ; and the Psalmist in his prophecies concerning Judas extends them to the Jewish nation, typified by him. (See Psa. lv. 7–22, cix. 8–31.)

The *analogy between Judas and the Jews was made more awful by the very place in which he came to his miserable end—the potter's field!* (Comp. Acts i. 18, 19 with Matt. xxvii. 7 and Zech. xi. 12.) There is reason for thinking that it was near Tophet, or the Valley of Hinnom, which the prophet connects with the potter's house and the potter's gate (ver. 2). Both Judas and the potter's earthen vessel, equally types of the Jews, were *dashed to pieces* [the vessel by God's command] in that place.

Here is subject for devout reflection and solemn meditation.—*Wordsworth.*

Vers. 14, 15. "*Then came Jeremiah from Tophet,*" &c.

Here commences the record of an incident which runs on connectedly with chap. xxi., and should have formed part of the chapter. For general explanations of the facts see Introductory Notes to chap. xxi.

CHAPTER XX.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. With chap. xx. the first section of this book closes. Probably this was Jeremiah's last public prophecy in Jehoiakim's reign, and formed the concluding entry in the "roll" which was read in part before Jehoiakim, and which Jehoiakim "cut with his penknife and cast into the fire" (chap. xxxvi. 23). To that "roll," which seems to have concluded with this emphatic prophecy as to the Babylonian Captivity (*cf.* xx. 4 with xxxvi. 29), "many like words" were "added besides" (xxxvi. 32); and these added words were the chapters following this twentieth, about whose dates there is no uncertainty, for each prophecy bears a special heading assigning

the occasion and date of its utterance. This prophecy occurred at the end of the third or beginning of the fourth year of Jehoiakim (see notes on chap. xviii.).

2. Contemporary Scriptures.—The events came closely contiguous to the records in 2 Kings xxiv. 1; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6.

3. National Affairs, and 4. Contemporaneous History (comp. notes on chap. vii). The capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar occurred early in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign.

5. Geographical References.—Ver. 2. "*The high gate of Benjamin.*" There was the *City* gate of Benjamin on the city's northern side, and towards the territory of Benjamin (ch. vii. 2, xxxvii. 13, xxxviii. 7); and there was the *Temple* gate of Benjamin, which is here described —"which was *in* [not *by*] the house of the Lord." This latter was called the "*High* gate" because situate on an eminence, and to distinguish it from the gate in the city wall.

6. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 1. "*Pashur the son of Immer the priest.*" *Pashur* the priest was head of the sixteenth course of the priests (1 Chron. xxiv. 14). *Immer* was one of the original governors of the Sanctuary, of whom there were twenty-four, sixteen sons of Eleazar, and eight sons of Ithamar (1 Chron. xxiv. 14). "Pashur" was *chief* governor, and from comparison of xxix. 25, 26, with lii. 24, it appears that the temple-governor occupied rank second to that of the high priest; was deputy high priest (*cf.* 2 Kings xxv. 18). Pashur was head of the twenty-four "guards" of the Temple, and had the right of apprehending any one committing what he thought an outrage within the precincts of the house of God; but the Sanhedrim alone had judicial power over those thus apprehended (comp. xxvi. 8, 10, 16). From words in the sixth verse—"thou hast *prophesied lies*"—it is evident that Pashur assumed prophetic functions; and most probably Pashur's "*friends*" (ver. 6) formed a party in the Jewish state who clamoured for alliance with Egypt in order to resist the arms of Assyria, and of whom Pashur was the moving genius, indulging in sanguine predictions of security and success (*vide* chap. xviii. 18, and v. 31). Ver. 5. "*King of Babylon.*" Nabopalassar was now king of the Babylonians. (*Vide* preliminary note on *Contemporary History* to chap. i.)

7. No Natural History allusions in this chapter.

8. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 2. "*Smote* Jeremiah and *put him in the stocks:*" "*Smote*"—probably inflicting the legal "forty stripes save one." "*Stocks*"—מַהְפֶּכֶת, an instrument of torture, from הָפַךְ, to *twist* or *rack*. The body was held in a crooked position, the neck, hands, and feet were secured, and much pain was suffered. This cruel instrument is first alluded to in 2 Chron. xvi. 10, and there rendered "prison-house."

9. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 3. "*Magor-missabib.*" (*Vide Lit. Crit.* on chap. vi. 25.) *Pashur* פַּשְׁחוּר, a compound word; פַּשׁ, and חוּר,—probably meaning, though derivation is uncertain, "*security* (or prosperity, joy) *around.*" Jeremiah would be prone to play upon the meaning of the name he changed: the new name meant "*Terror on every side.*" Jeremiah uses this phrase in chap. vi. 25, xx. 3, 10, xlvi. 5, xlix. 29; Lam. ii. 22.

Ver. 5. "*Strength . . . labours:*" *Stores*—provisions laid up in their magazines and granaries: and *gains*—fruits of industry, the profits or wealth of the community.

Ver. 7. "*Hast deceived:*" from פָּתָה. Used in *Piel* both in a good and bad sense; to *persuade*, rendered in ver. 10 "*enticed.*" He was unwilling to undertake the prophetic office (chap. i. 7), but God had persuaded him with promises (i. 8, 17–19), which, however, Jeremiah had misapprehended. God promised no immunity from abuse but that he should "prevail."

"*Daily:*" all the day long.

Ver. 8. "*For since I spake, I cried out,*" &c. "For as often as I speak or cry, I must cry concerning violence and ill-treatment."—*Lange.* "Whenever I speak, I must shout; I must cry violence and spoil." The two words "*cried, cried,*" are not the same in the Hebrew: the first means to *complain*, the second to *call out, proclaim.* "For as often as I speak I must complain; I call out violence and spoil."—*Speaker's Com.*

"*Word of the Lord was made:*" *is* made. "*Daily*"—all the day long.

Ver. 9. "*Then I said.....But his word was.*" Better: "And *when I say I will not*, &c.—*name, then it becometh* in my heart," &c.

"*I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.*" I weary myself to hold it in, but cannot (*vide* chap. vi. 11).

Ver. 10. Read the verse thus. "For I *hear* the *whispering* (detraction, *Henderson*) of many, fear on every side [Magor-missabib, again]: (saying) Report ye, and we will report *him.* All my familiars [Lit. *the men of my peace; Keil*, every man of my friendship] *watch* for my halting" [my fall—*Henderson*]. Perhaps *they say* "he will be enticed," &c.

Ver. 11. "*A mighty terrible one:*" Rather, a formidable warrior.

"*Ashamed, for they shall not prosper,*" &c.: Rather, ashamed, *because they have not acted wisely; with an everlasting reproach* (disgrace) that shall never be forgotten.

Ver. 12. "*Opened my cause;*" On Thee have I rolled my cause, *committed* it (*cf.* xi. 20).

HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XX.

Section 1–6. Persecution of the faithful prophet.

,, 7–18. Complaining prayer merging into godly confidence.

,, 14–18. An extravagant dirge over an unhappy life.

Section 1–6.—Persecution of the Faithful Prophet.

I. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah.

1. *The impropriety of it.* Pashur was a priest; and Jeremiah, being also of the priestly order, should have been protected by him. Moreover, the priests of Jehovah should have been prompt and zealous to second the work of a prophet of Jehovah.

2. *The malignity of it.* "A man's foes are they of his own household." Compare the action of Zedekiah (the *false* priest, 1 Kings xxii. 24); and of those *foul* priests (Matt. xxvi. 67, 68). "The greatest malignity to God's prophets was found among those that professed sanctity and concern for God and His church." Pashur found his own sanguine prophecies hereby refuted, and was wroth. (See *Personal Allusions.*)

3. *The illegality of it.* "Smote him," perhaps with the hand or staff of authority, as afterwards Paul was smitten (Acts xxiii. 2). But Pashur had no right to administer justice (see note on verse under *Personal Allusions*). But rules of justice are set aside: "The enemies of piety would never allow themselves to be governed by the laws of equity."

4. *The cruelty of it.* "Put in stocks:" and thus confined through the night into next day, exposed to public derision. "The best men have met with the worst treatment. It may well rouse pious indignation to see such a man as Pashur on the bench, and such a man as Jeremiah in the stocks! It is well that there is another life after this, when persons and things will appear with another face."

II. God's just displeasure against Pashur. Jeremiah "suffered and threatened not;" but when released, he came with a special message from Jehovah.

1. Did Pashur aim to *make himself easy*, by silencing one who told him his faults, and which endangered his reputation with the people? He shall not gain his point, for

(*a.*) Though the prophet should be silent, his *own conscience shall make him uneasy.* "*Magor-missabib.*" God can make a sinner a "*terror to himself*" (ver. 4). Persons in deep melancholy also become a *terror* "*to all their friends*" *about them.*

(*b.*) *His friends*, in whom he put confidence and studied to oblige in persecuting Jeremiah, *shall all fail him* (ver. 4).

(*c.*) The issue shall show his terror to be not causeless, for *Divine vengeance awaited him* (ver. 6). Let persecutors read the doom of Pashur and tremble; tremble to repentance before they be made to tremble to their ruin.

2. Did he aim to *make the people easy* by stopping Jeremiah's warning prophecies? It appears from ver. 6 that he set himself up as a prophet, and told the people they should have peace. Yet the word of God will have its course.

(*a.*) The *country* shall be ruined: "I will give all Judah," &c. (ver. 4).

(*b.*) The *city* shall be ruined (ver. 5). For the king of Babylon shall (1) seize their military stores, "*the strength of the city;*" (2) carry off their wares and merchandise, "*their labours;*" (3) plunder their fine houses of their "*precious things;*" (4) rifle the exchequer, the jewels of the crown and "*all the treasures of the kings of Judah.*" In part taken from *Matthew Henry.*

See *Addenda:* Persecution of God's Servants.

Section 7–13.—Complaining Prayer Merging into Godly Confidence.

There are two interpretations of this outburst of intense emotion—

1. It might have been the result of *feelings wounded* by the indignities of the public smiting and a night spent in the stocks.

2. It was more probably the outcry of *mental agony* occasioned by the seeming failure of his ministry to recal his nation from ungodliness and ruin.

It should be noticed that though Jeremiah *bows before God crushed by distress of spirit*, he betrays nothing of this before the people, but *stands before the multitude with heroic valour*, warning prince, priest, and people of the doom their sins invoked.

I. A painful misapprehension of his prophetic mission.

1. In reference to *what God had done with him.* He avows that Jehovah had

(*a.*) Persuaded him into His service by assurances which had failed. He misread God's promise (chap. i. 8, 18).

(*b.*) Constrained him wholly against his will to a painful mission. His timid nature shrank from hardship.

(*c.*) Exposed him to derision by deferring the fulfilment of his predictions. Jeremiah was in too great haste for God to vindicate His word.

2. In reference to *what he should do for God.* He was tempted

(*a.*) Temporarily to hold back from further witness for God. Not "mention His name."

(*b.*) Forcibly to suppress the prophetic spirit within him. But it proved a "burning fire within his bones."

(*c.*) He even "wearied" himself with the silence he imposed upon himself: but the word of God was mightier than his resolutions.

II. An alarming experience of abuse from his people.

1. *Scornful defamation of his preaching* (ver. 10). They seem to have summed up his preaching as being nothing but the reiteration of the words—"*Magor-missabib, i.e.*, "Fear on every side," and derided him with it. He was a preacher of fear! The same appears from ver. 8—"Whenever I spake I proclaimed violence and spoil." And the people laughed at him as a persistent croaker—prophet of evil. They *whispered* among themselves against him, "Here is 'Fear-on-every-side preaching again!"

2. *Virulent conspiracy against his person.* They resolve to "report" his words to the authorities and the king, and so bring him into odium and punishment. Further, his "familiars" joined in the conspiracy, and while feigning to be "men of his peace," yet sought occasion to betray him.

III. A triumphant assurance of Divine protection.

1. *That Jehovah would defend him with terrible mightiness* (ver. 11). He knew that the Lord was personally "with" him: on his side, to protect him, to make his word good, to ultimately vindicate him against "defamation" and "derision," and to smite terror into his antagonists.

2. *That his persecutors would be defeated with terrible disgrace.* Their impotent malice and crafty designs shall fail against Jeremiah; while their own overthrow shall involve them in greatest shame and perpetual distress.

IV. A confident surrender of his cause to God.

1. *His inmost heart was opened fully to Him* (ver. 12).

(*a.*) God knew him thoroughly: saw all the thoughts and feelings which moved within him; could therefore judge him righteously.

(*b.*) To God he entrusted himself: rolled his cause on Him. He sought no vindication or help elsewhere.

(*c.*) God would right him with his traducers: "Vengeance belongeth unto God."

2. *His grateful soul poured itself forth in praise to Him* (ver. 13).

(*a.*) It was the triumph of faith over fear. His complaints are all silenced and turned into thanksgiving.

(*b.*) It rose from the realisation of experienced Providence: "He *hath* delivered the soul of the poor," &c. Memory came in to his aid; and hope rose like the dawn upon the night-gloom of his despondency. "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

Section 14–18.—A Passionate Dirge over an Unhappy Life.

In this sudden transition of trust to despair we see a revelation of the inner workings of Jeremiah's heart, consequent upon the treatment he received from his treacherous friends and cruel persecutors, and on the seeming failure of his prophecies and his own desertion by God whose prophet he was.

I. It is not to be denied that we have here **a passionate outbreak of human infirmity.** But this display

1. *Proves that there has been no reserve practised by the prophets;* and thus we see a portraiture of Jeremiah delineated in his true colours by his own hand. This also

2. *Inspires us with confidence in the truth of the narrative;* and also excites our sympathy with Jeremiah in his sufferings, which extorted such utterances from him.

Note, that as it was with Job (iii. 3–26) so with Jeremiah—*he was purified by suffering.* After the passionate utterances in this chapter we see no more evidence of *weakness* or *impatience* in Jeremiah. On the contrary, the prophet, who now was weak and desponding, afterwards strengthened and encouraged others (see chap. xlvi. 1–5).

II. Here also, from these impatient ejaculations of Jeremiah, we have providentially clear proof *that the theory* of some Jewish interpreters *is groundless*, by which Isaiah's magnificent and mysterious prophecy concerning the Messiah (chap. liii.) is made to refer to Jeremiah.

1. How could one who was *compassed with infirmity and betrayed into sin* (as Jeremiah shows himself to have been) have been accepted—as these anti-Messianic theorists would have us believe—as *a vicarious atonement for the sins of the world?*

2. *In his sufferings*, Jeremiah was a signal *type of Christ:* especially in the cruel and shameful usage he received from those to whom he preached, and whom he would have delivered from ruin had they listened to his preaching. But in all *human types* of Christ there are some blemishes which separate them immeasurably from the Divine Antitype.

3. *Christ always excels where they most fail.* Jeremiah fails in his *impatience* under *persecution*, in *repining against God*, and in *murmuring at his own condition.* There Christ excels. His meat was to do His Father's will (John iv. 34); and, in the immediate prospect of suffering, His language was, "Now is the Son of Man *glorified*, and God is *glorified in Him*" (John xiii. 31; comp. Heb. xii. 2).

III. Here we have evidence of **the greater grace given after the Incarnation** than had ever been vouchsafed to those who lived before it.

Two of *the greatest saints and sufferers*, Job and Jeremiah—one the saint and sufferer of the *Patriarchal* dispensation, the other the suffering prophet of the *Mosaic* economy—are so perturbed by suffering that they curse the day of their birth.

But (as *Chrysostom* observes in Hom. iv. on the patience of Job) the apostles of Christ *rejoiced* in tribulation, and were thankful to God that they were *counted worthy* to *suffer* for His name.—*Arranged from Wordsworth.*

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 4. *Theme:* THE WICKED, TERRIFIED AND TERRIFYING. "For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself and to all thy friends."

I. **A guilty man may enjoy confidence, and inspire confidence in others.** This is evident here. Unless so, it would not be needful for God to act to change confidence into terror.

1. *Sinners live on in easy but transient security.*

2. *The "friends" of ungodly men are fortified in their self-confidence* by boastful conduct of fellow-transgressors.

II. **A guilty man's confidence may be turned into terror and amaze.**

1. *God can do it, does* do it, *will* do it. He can make the most daring sinner a terror to himself, and will find a way to alarm him.

2. *Conviction of sin* arouses terror. Example: *John Bunyan.* See also his Christian before Sinai, in "Pilgrim's Progress."

3. *Sudden peril of life or risk of worldly gains* startle him to agonising apprehensions.

4. *Death's darkness and eternity's nearness* will certainly appal him. "How wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?"

5. *On the Judgment Day*, what terror will seize the guilty. "Rocks fall on us, and hide us," &c.

III. A guilty man's terror will alarm his friends.

1. *A sinner whose hilarity and recklessness have changed into alarm* for guilt and dread of doom, *is like an apparition at the feast of worldly souls.* Banquo's ghost. His tremblings and terrors alarm them, communicating fear to their souls.

2. *A sinner's deathbed has often filled observers with awful fears for themselves.*

See *Addenda:* THE WICKED A TERROR.

Comments—

"Wherein did his (Pashur's) punishment consist? Probably in this. He was one of the leading men who, in encouraging Jehoiakim to enter upon that course which ended in the ruin of Judah, had "prophesied lies." When, then, he saw the dreadful slaughter of his countrymen,—Jehoiakim put to death, his young son dragged into captivity, and the land stripped of all that was best—his conscience so condemned him as the guilty cause of such great misery, that in the agonies of remorse he became a terror to himself and his friends."—*Speaker's Com.*

Ver. 7. *Theme:* IS GOD A DECEIVER? The word "deceived" should be "enticed" or "persuaded." Comp. Gen. ix. 27; Prov. xxv. 15; Hos. ii. 14, in which last text the word is rendered "allure." God can induce but never delude.

I. God has approved Himself to all His servants as a faithful Master. He has never *decoyed* them; never *deserted* them.

II. Servants of God may deceive themselves in His service by sanguine expectations.

1. Jeremiah *misapprehended God's words of promise and assurance.* The words (chap. i. 10) were interpreted by him in a flattering sense. He expected *general homage* to be paid him as God's messenger.

2. But he knew *the condition of prophetic work* in all ages. All God's messengers before him had been persecuted, and he had no reason to look for a better lot.

3. Further, *God emphatically stated that princes and priests would treat him ill.* "They shall fight against thee" (chap. i. 19).

4. All Christian workers are *distinctly forewarned* of the troubles they will meet (John xvi. 1, 2).

III. The persuasions of God overpower our natural reluctance and fears. "Thou wast stronger than I, and hast prevailed."

1. *His pleas were refuted.* He urged that he was under age, and unequal to the office. God took all reality out of his arguments by assuring him that He had "sanctified" him to this work, and by equipping him for the task (chap. i. 9).

2. *His temerity was overruled.* He was afraid of facing the authorities and contending with them. But God summoned him not to be "dismayed at their faces," and made him "a defenced city," &c.

Even so out of weakness God makes strong "the weak things of the world to confound the mighty." He is able to make all grace abound. Thus He *surprises* us by making us "able to do exceeding abundantly above all we think." Yet He never deceives or disappoints a soul.

Ver. 7. *Theme:* MOCKING AT THE PREACHER. "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me."

Two forms of this irritating continually assailed him.

I. Official ridicule.

1. *They made jest of everything he did and said.* They treated him as if he were a fool, good for nothing but to make sport. Thus he was—

(*a.*) *Continually*,—"daily," literally "all the day long."

(*b.*) *Universally*, "Every one mocks me."

"The greatest so far forget *their own* gravity, and the meanest so far forget *mine*."

Thus our Lord on the Cross was reviled both by priest and people.

2. *His preaching was the special object of their derision* (ver. 8). That for which they should have honoured and respected him was the very thing for which they reviled and reproached him.

It is sad to think that though Divine Revelation be one of the greatest blessings and honours ever bestowed on the world, yet it has been very much turned to the reproach of the most zealous preachers and believers.

Two things they derided him for—

(*a.*) The *manner* of his preaching: "Since he spake, he cried out." He was too vigorous and loud in his preaching. Lively preachers are the scorn of careless unbelieving hearers.

(*b.*) The *matter* of his preaching: He cried, "Violence and spoil." He reproved them for "violence and spoil" toward one another, and for this they ridiculed him as over-precise; and he prophesied of "violence and spoil" as the punishment of their sin, and for this they reviled him as over-credulous.

II. **Personal reproach.** Not merely did they laugh at his ministry, but they acted a more spiteful part, and with more subtlety.

1. *They spread false reports of him* (ver. 10). They represented Jeremiah as instilling "fears on every side," so to make them uneasy under the government, and disposed to rebellion.

Jeremiah, in his complaint, makes use of the same words that David (Ps. xxxi. 13) had used before him, that it might be a comfort to him to think that other good men had suffered like abuses before him.

2. *Flatterers watched his words for an occasion of accusation* against him to the government. "My familiars watched for my halting," &c. Just as the spies came to Christ feigning to be just men (Luke xx. 20). They hoped Jeremiah would be led on and enticed to say something which they might seize upon, and for which they could secure his condemnation before the king or Sanhedrim.

This malignant treachery found fullest illustration in Jeremiah's Divine Antitype, Jesus Christ, against whom they laid wait, and "suborned men" for the purpose to "entangle Him in His talk that they might accuse Him to the governor" (Matt. xxii. 15).—*Comp. Wordsworth* and *Matthew Henry*.

See *Addenda*: DERIDING THE PREACHER.

Ver. 9. *Theme:* THE SOUL UNDER DISCOURAGEMENT.

We behold here the struggle between grace and corruption: or as Paul expresses it, "the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." And when we see how awfully an unhallowed temper prevailed over this good man Jeremiah, we cannot but exclaim: "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him," &c.

In the conflict here expressed we behold

I. **The effects of discouragement on a pious soul.**

1. *In our labours for the good of others.* *Ministers* are apt to complain that "they have laboured in vain and spent their strength for nought;" and under these feelings, either desert their post, or lament that they have not been more profitably employed.

Moses thus erred (Exod. v. 22, 23). *Joshua* also after his entrance into Canaan (Josh. vii. 7).

Parents likewise mourn over their children, masters over their servants, teachers over the poor they instruct, &c.

2. *In our exertions for our own souls.* Persons, when first "enticed" or "persuaded" to embrace the Gospel, fondly imagine that they will go forward in the divine life with ease. Conflicts come, and slow progress is made. Then they complain, "my way is hid from the Lord," &c. (Isa. xl. 27). Such apprehension is most enervating.

II. **The effect of piety on a discouraged soul.** Jeremiah attempted for a season to execute his rash deter-

mination, but could not persist, for the word of God was like a burning fire in his bones, so that he must declare it.

Thus will grace work in every soul even under deepest discouragements.

1. *To shame our querulous impatience.* When David had given vent to querulousness, he corrected himself (Ps. lxxiii. 12–16, lxxvii. 7–10). We complain of our non-success. Prophets and apostles have done so before us. We should wait (Heb. ii. 3).

2. *To revive our languid hopes.* Grace will bring to our view God's promises; assure us that "His arm is not shortened," &c.

3. *To resuscitate our drooping energies.* Jeremiah was "weary with forbearing," even more than with executing his mission. And if grace have its perfect work in us, so we shall be. Our labours, both ministerial and personal, will be renewed. God has said, "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season," &c. And depending on His word, we shall go forward, "steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

(*a.*) *Expect discouragements in every part of your duty.* They are God's appointed means for trying our faith and love, and for increasing every divine grace in us.

(*b.*) *Make them occasions for glorifying God the more.* If we have "fightings without and fears within," we must go the more earnestly to God, and rely the more firmly on His promised aid. Instead of sinking under discouragements, we must say: "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."—*Simeon.*

Ver. 12. *Theme:* GOD THE HEART-SEARCHER. See Homilies on chap. xi. 20, xxvii. 10.

Ver. 13. *Theme:* THE SONG OF REDEMPTION.

Immediately he had "opened" or committed "his cause" to God, he could sing for joy.

I. **Faith grasped a fact as yet in the future.** Jeremiah's outward circumstances were still disturbed and perilous. But he now realises God's sufficiency and fidelity, even as before (ver. 7) he had distrusted Him

Faith turned his tremblings into triumphs.

So the soul when Christ's sufficiency and faithfulness are apprehended. "Lo! this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

II. **Joy filled his soul over God's gracious rescue.** His soul had been "*poor;*" poor in courage, poor in faith, poor in grace.

"*Evil-doers*" had his soul in their "hand."

But *God had redeemed his soul* from destruction.

III. **Songs of praise silenced sighs of complaint.** He found peace immediately he could leave his cause in faith to God.

Complaints are now exchanged for thanksgiving, when once the soul knows its Redeemer.

God's loving-kindness and grace overwhelms the soul with rejoicing.

We may *appeal to every soul* for whom the redemption of Calvary has been effectively wrought by Christ, and which is offered to sinners "without money and without price"—"Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord."

> "O for this love let rocks and hills
> Their lasting silence break,
> And all harmonious human tongues,
> Their Saviour's praises speak."

Vers. 14–18. *Theme:* IMPRECATIONS ON HIS BIRTH. See Sectional treatment, *supra.*

The *Rev. John Owen*, in editing *Calvin's* Commentaries in this place, remarks—

"The greatest difficulty in this passage is *its connection.* That Jeremiah should have cursed his birthday is what can be accounted for as in the case of Job. *Nature, even in the best of men, sometimes utters its voice.* But how he came to do this immediately after having thanked God for his deliverance seems singular. The explanation of Calvin, *that he relates what had*

passed in his mind, while he was confined by Pashur, is plausible, and has been adopted by *Grotius*, *Henry*, and others. *Scott* acknowledges the transition to be very extraordinary, but thinks that the Prophet describes what had passed through his own mind, and says that the experience of good men proves that such sudden changes occur. 'An experimental acquaintance with our own hearts,' he says, 'and the variations of our passions under sharp trials, as encouraging or discouraging thoughts occur to our minds, will best enable us to understand it.' This is probably the right view of the subject."

"i. The Prophet teaches us here that he was not only opposed by enemies, but also *distressed inwardly in his mind*, so that he was carried away, contrary to reason and judgment, by turbulent emotions which even led him to give utterance to vile blasphemies.

"ii. We may learn *with what care ought every one of us to watch himself*, lest we be carried away by a violent feeling, so as to become intemperate and unruly.

"iii. Yet *the origin of his zeal was right*. His complaint was not that *he was afflicted* with disease, &c., but because *all his labour was lost which he spent for the well-being of his people*, and because he found *the truth of God loaded with calumnies* and reproaches. When he saw the ungodly thus insolently resisting him, and that all religion was treated with ridicule, he felt deeply moved.

"iv. Yet when we thus become weary of life, with all the light and blessings of God, it is *because disdain reigns within us*, or that we cannot *with resignation bear reproaches*, or that poverty is too grievous for us, &c. Often it is not that we (as with Jeremiah) are influenced with zeal for God."—*Calvin.*

On Ver. 15. See *Introduction*. Part I.—"*Parentage and Calling.*"

NOTICEABLE TOPIC IN CHAPTER XX.

Topic: EXISTENCE REGRETTED.—"*Cursed be the day wherein I was born*" (ver. 14).

Job and Jeremiah were alike in wishing they had never been born. They were both men of sorrow. In the intensity of his grief Job exclaimed, "Let the day perish wherein I was born;" and Jeremiah in equal mental anguish cries, "Cursed be the day," &c. Certainly this was

I. A preference alike irreligious and irrational.

1. *Good men* should not for a moment think that *non-existence is preferable* to life and being. They were both good men, children of God; and existence was therefore a blessing to be prized, not an evil to be mourned over. Had they been versed in *the design and results of Divine dispensations*, as was Paul, they would have said, "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment," &c. With *such a destiny before them*, instead of cursing the day of birth, they would have blessed it as the dawn of an eternal existence, to be hereafter crowned with a glory that fadeth not away.

2. *Ungodly men* may with some degree of reason *prefer non-existence*: because in *trouble* they have no Divine support, in *death* no good hope, in *eternity* no expectation but the penalty of sin. Such men, when the sorrows of death encompass them, or when ushered into the eternal world, have good reason to say, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born."

II. Non-existence is preferable to existence unless existence possess more pleasure than pain.

1. If every ungodly man lived out threescore years and ten, and the *whole was spent in pleasure*, yet, as that period is but momentary as compared with his eternal existence, and *as that existence is to be one of pain*, he might curse the day of his birth.

2. Existence, eternal *existence is a blessing to all unfallen ones*, and also to such fallen ones as are *redeemed* by the death of Christ. It requires no stretch of

imagination to suppose that both Job and Jeremiah are now praising and blessing God for that very day which in the time of their earthly sorrows they cursed.

3. But perpetuity of existence can be no blessing to the "*angels who kept not their first estate*," nor to *those of the human race* who by impenitence and unbelief reject the great salvation, and bring upon themselves the *double condemnation*—the condemnation of the law and the condemnation of the gospel.

III. Hell and heaven are two great teachers; they teach lessons which are not learnt on earth, and wonderfully alter men's views of Divine dispensations and revealed truths.

1. Hell teaches—the folly of wickedness, the full enormity of sin in the penalty it has entailed, and leads all its victims amid the consequences of their depravity to curse the day wherein they were born.

2. Heaven teaches—the wisdom of holiness, the full benefits of redemption in the felicity it has secured, and leads all the ransomed to bless the day of their birth as the morn of their noontide of glory.

Here we "know in part" and can "prophesy but in part." Fuller and wider disclosures are made when the spirit is ushered into that world.

Having thus seen that there are in some cases reasons for cursing the day of one's birth, let it be remembered that

IV. God is not willing that any should have occasion for preferring non-existence.

1. He *has devised and carried out a costly plan* by which the existence of fallen ones might be made an eternal blessing. This plan was published in Eden, foreshadowed in type, proclaimed by prophets, and consummated in the death of Jesus Christ. On the cross He announced "It is finished."

2. *Every man who now wishes for a glorious existence* has only to look to Jesus and be saved. Myriads have looked, and a blessed immortality is their portion: myriads have refused to look, and a wretched immortality is their inheritance.

Life is a solemn thing. It has in it everlasting perpetuity; and *so also has death.*

"It is not all of life to live,
Nor all of death to die."

Life and death are only the seed-time: a harvest follows, that of bliss or woe. Inspiration answers the inquiry, What harvest shall I reap? thus—"Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."—*Arranged from Rev. D. Pledge's "Morning and Evening Walks with Jeremiah."*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XX. ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Vers. 1–6. PERSECUTION OF GOD'S SERVANTS.

"*Smote Jeremiah:*" *with his fist*, as Zedekiah smote Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 24), and as Bonner did Hawkes and other martyrs, pulling off part of their beards; or *with a staff* as our Saviour was struck (Matt. xxvi. 67); and as that Popish bishop, degrading a martyr minister, struck him so hard with his crosier-staff as he was kneeling on the stairs at St. Paul's, that he fell down backwards and broke his head. *Atqui lapidandi sunt hæretici sacrarum literarum argumentis*, saith Athanasius [*Contra Arian*]. But heretics are to be stoned with Scripture arguments; and men may a good deal sooner be cudgelled into a treaty than into a tenet.

"*Put him in the stocks:*" "As they afterwards did Paul and Silas (Acts xvi.); Clerinus the martyr, mentioned in Cyprian's epistles; Mr. Philpot in the Bishop of London's coal-house; and that good woman, who, suffering afterwards for the same cause, rejoiced much that her leg was put in the same hole of the stocks where Philpot's leg had lain before."—*Trapp*

"And when religious sects ran mad,
He held, in spite of all his learning,
That if a man's belief is bad,
It will not be improved by burning."
—*Praed.*

Ver. 4. The wicked a terror.

"Such terror befell Tullus Hostilius, king of Rome, who had for his gods Pavor and Pallor. *Dignissimus sane qui deos suos semper haberet præsentes*, saith Lactantius wittily; *i.e.*, great pity but this man should ever have had his gods at hand, since he was so fond of them. Our Richard III. and Charles IX. of France, a pair of bloody princes, were Magor-missabibs in their generations, as terrible at length to themselves as they had been formerly to others; and therefore could never endure to be awakened in the night without music or some like diversion."—*Trapp.*

"Unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets."—*Shakespeare.*

"Here, here it lies; a lump of lead by day;
And in my short, distracted, nightly slumbers,
The hag that rides my dreams."—*Dryden.*

"He that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon."—*Milton.*

"Horror and doubt distract
His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir
The hell within him; for within him hell
He brings, and round about him; nor from hell
One step, no more than from himself, can fly
By change of place."—*Byron.*

Tiberius declared in the Senate that he suffered death daily.

Ver. 7. Deriding the preacher.

See the *Life of John Wesley* for instances.

"The cynics said long ago of the Megarians, 'Better be their horse, dog, or pander than their teacher, for better should he be regarded.'"—*Trapp.*

A modern rhyme puts the case thus—

"Tickle the people and make them gria,
Tickle them more and *you* will win:
Teach the people; you'll ne'er grow rich,
But live like a beggar and die in a ditch."

Ver. 14. Jeremiah's discouragement.

"What was the cause of this discouragement? He does not leave us in the dark as to this: he tells us that he 'heard the defaming of many'—'My familiars watched for my halting,' &c. This was well suited to dismay a man of Jeremiah's temper; but he again speedily comes back to his trust in God:—'But the Lord is with me.'

"It is possible that on some occasion Jeremiah had, under the influence of such feelings as he so often expresses, been tempted to soften or to suppress some part of a message entrusted to him, deeming it likely to excite that violent antagonism which was grievous to his peaceful temper. The man who had confessedly purposed not to speak at all, might think of withholding part of the words he was commanded to speak. This supposition would give added force to the injunction, which on one occasion he received:—'Speak *all* the words that I command thee to speak unto them. *Diminish not a* word.' So here also he found that there was no discretion left to him."—*Kitto.*

CHAPTER XXI.

Critical and Exegetical Notes.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. Beginning of Zedekiah's reign. *Vide* Notes, and especially *Personal Allusions* to chap. i. *Usher* dates the chapter B.C. 589; *Hales* B.C. 587.

2. Contemporary Scriptures.—2 Kings xxiv. 17—xxv. 2. *Daniel* had been prophesying at Babylon from the time of the first captivity of Judah under Jehoiakim, and his book runs on over to the reign of Zedekiah. *Ezekiel* also appears as a prophet (at Babylon) when he sat among the captives by the river Chebar (Ezek. i. 1).

3. National Affairs.—Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, was deposed by the Chaldean king after three months' reign. *Mattaniah* (named by Nebuchadnezzar Zedekiah), the brother of Jehoiakim, had been placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar as his vassal. Against this Chaldean power

Zedekiah early revolted in favour of Egypt, then growing into a first-class power. Nebuchadnezzar thereupon sends invaders against Jerusalem; and apprehending this attack, Zedekiah sends the embassy to Jeremiah recorded in this chapter.

4. Contemporary History.—*Pharaoh-Hophra* reigned in Egypt: *Nebuchadnezzar* in Babylon: *Solon* at Athens. At this time Jehoiachin (his other names were Jeconiah and Coniah), with his queen-mother Nehushta, and the highest families of Judah, pined in captivity in Babylon. It is not wonderful, therefore, that Zedekiah, led by his nobles, revolted against the Chaldean power which now dominated from Babylon the centre of the Chaldean sway.

5. Geographical References. — Ver. 4. "*Babylon and Chaldeans.*" Chaldea is properly only the southerly division of Babylonia; but the Chaldea over which Nebuchadnezzar was king comprised the entire tract of country which lay between the Euphrates and the Tigris, and an equal breadth of country on the Arabian desert side of the Euphrates capable of irrigation from that river, and extending along the course of the Euphrates for over 400 miles, and measuring in average breadth 100 miles. Ver. 13. "*Valley and plain:*" *Vide* the note *in loc.* on chap. xvii. 3. The *valley* means that which ran between Mount Zion and Mount Moriah; and the rock, Mount Zion itself.

6. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 1. "*Zedekiah:*" *Vide* note above, under *National Affairs*, and also *Personal Allusions* to chap. i. "*Pashur the son of Melchiah:*" this was the fifth order of the priesthood, and Pashur was the head of this order (1 Chron. xxiv. 9–14). [This is *not* the Pashur mentioned in previous chapter]. "*Zephaniah,*" &c., connected with the twenty-fourth priestly family (1 Chron. xxiv. 18). This Zephaniah was afterwards put to death by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah (Jer. lii. 24). Ver. 2. "*Nebuchadrezzar.*" This is more nearly the Chaldean spelling of his name than Nebuchadnezzar. He was the son of Nabopolassar, and led the army against Egypt and conquered it at Charchemish. See further in *Literary Criticisms* below. Ver. 4. "*Chaldeans.*" *Vide Geog. Ref., supra.*

7. Natural History.—Ver. 14. "*The forest thereof.*" "A city is a forest of houses."—*Keil.* A reference here to the dense mass of residences and edifices built of the cedar trees from Lebanon (comp. Jer. xxii. 7 with lii. 13, and 2 Kings xxv. 9).

8. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 12. "*Execute judgment in the morning.*" Kings sat in judgment at this time of the day. (Comp. 2 Sam. iv. 5; Job xx. 27; Psa. ci. 8). See *Lit. Crit.* below.

9. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 2. "*Nebuchadrezzar:*" a noticeable spelling: with ר instead of ן. Jeremiah uses this form twenty-six times; but the form with ן ten times. Jeremiah used the more correct Chaldean form of the name until current usage among the Jews settled the spelling with the ן instead of with the ר. The LXX. write the name thus, Ναβουχοδονόσορ; and Berosus thus, Ναβουχοδονόσορος; the recently discovered Assyrian cylinders thus, *Nabu-Rudurri-uzur.* Professor Rawlinson interprets this last to mean *Nebo protects the landmarks;* and Schrader, *Nebo, protect thou the crown.* The name, interpreted from Persian roots, had been supposed to mean, *Nebo deorum princeps,* or *Nebo deus ignis.*

Ver. 4. "*I will assemble them,*" &c. The antecedent of *them* is doubtful, whether "weapons" or "Chaldeans;" but the latter is the nearer and more probable antecedent.

Ver. 7. "*And such as are left:*" וְאֵת; the *Vav* may be regarded as explicative—*even* such as are left, namely, of the *people.*

Ver. 9. "*His life for a prey:*" i.e., shall make his escape with it.

Ver. 12. "*In the morning.*" לַבֹּקֶר *Keil* regards as a distributive adverb, *every morning;* while *Henderson* regards it as here used idiomatically, as in Psa. xc. 14, cxliii. 8, where בַּבֹּקֶר means *early, soon, quickly:* implying urgency; for the opportunity would quickly end.

SECTIONAL SUMMARY OF CHAPTER XXI.

God's Final offer of Deliverance.

The siege of Jerusalem had begun. Zedekiah in alarm sent to ask of Jeremiah respecting the event.

I. Times of distress drive men to seek God's servants whom amid their prosperity they despised.

1. Apprehensive of evil, *they crave counsel and prayers* (ver. 2). Zedekiah sent two of the priests who were in highest office to ask Jeremiah's interposition with Jehovah! What a humbling of their arrogant disregard of this hitherto reviled prophet!

2. Yet they crave counsels and prayers *only to avert punishment* (ver. 2). Their sole desire was that Jeremiah's prayers would prevail with God to thwart Nebuchadnezzar. There was no humiliation for the sin which brought this visitation on the nation.

See *Addenda:* Seeking Counsel.

II. Messages of wrath will meet those who refuse to seek God except in times of distress.

1. Professors of religion *may presume upon their outward privileges* until God be *angered and wholly alienated.* These priests, this king, and indeed the whole nation, had so presumed upon their being *God's people;* but their presumption would now be checked (ver. 5).

2. *Resources of self-reliance will be rendered powerless* in the day of adversity (ver. 4).

3. Overwhelming disaster shall avenge the iniquities which have long called for Divine punishment. God had been slow to anger and of great kindness, but the time for mercy was now irrecoverably past (vers. 6, 7).

The messenger of God has woful messages to declare against such as despise His gracious warnings and weary out His longsuffering.

III. A way of mercy is still opened to such as will regard Divine counsels.

The king and princes would not surrender to Nebuchadnezzar: they trusted their own counsels, and would not heed God's; but some among the people might be found ready to heed God's word and thereby secure immunity from imminent ruin.

1. *Even to the latest hour salvation is offered* (ver. 8); although the enemy was at the very gates.

2. *The way of life consists in trustfully submitting to God's directions* (ver. 9). It required *prompt* obedience, and the performance of a part which would be *humiliating* and seemed *painful*—"falleth to the Chaldeans," whom they hated.

God leaves no sinner on earth without "a way of escape;" but it depends on his implicit surrender to His counsels whether he be saved. Happily now *we may find a more gracious salvation* than was offered to those people.

IV. To those eminent in sin God sends special warnings of doom.

1. *God recognises the circumstances which aggravate individual disobedience.* There was special heinousness in the conduct of "the king of Judah" (ver. 11), since he belonged to the "house of David" (ver. 12).

2. *A final appeal is made to even greatest transgressors* (ver. 12).

3. Yet *God will show no further mercy* when His warnings are rejected with self-confident pride. The reply of the king (ver. 13) virtually was, "We have a strong city," we dwell in "the rock of the plain:" *he boasted in his security.* Further, he despised the forces of destruction which were gathering—"Who shall come down against us? who shall enter into our habitation?" But *God was against the king of Judah;* and therefore no hope of safety was left.

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* WILFUL INQUIRERS SEEKING COUNSEL.

I. In what mind they came.

1. *Their own counsels were determined* and fixed; so that they were not in a teachable mood. This Pashur belonged to the party who counselled that Nebuchadnezzar be resisted by force of arms, for he endeavoured to persuade King Zedekiah to put Jeremiah to death as a traitor (chap. xxxviii. 1–4). Zephaniah likewise (from Nebuchadnezzar having slain him at Riblah, chap. lii. 24) was manifestly hostile to any surrender to the Chaldean force. Thus they came with predetermined opinions.

2. They *declared what counsels they wished to receive.* Asking Jeremiah to "inquire of the Lord for them," they yet specified the kind of reply they expected to be returned—that Nebuchadnezzar "may go up from us;" *i.e.*, be compelled to raise the siege, and so give these *inquirers* the gratification they sought.

This is not inquiry; it is *dictation.* Such inquiry is insolent to God. All supplication for Divine leading which is prompted by predetermination and wilfulness is *self-delusive* in the inquirer and *offensive to God.*

II. In what delusion they reposed.

"If so be that the Lord will deal with us according to all His wondrous works."

1. *Their own demerits were conveniently ignored.* It would almost seem that they were unconscious of their flagrant impiety and wickedness. Certainly God's actions towards them were *not to be regulated by righteousness, not to be affected by their crying iniquities, not to be swayed by their defiance of Divine pleadings and warnings*, but only "according to His wondrous works."

2. *Their exclusive request was for miraculous interposition.* Not that God would exert His *gracious power to reform them;* but that, leaving them still in their sins, and unpunished for their sins, He would exert His *miraculous* power to protect them. Panic prayers, such as these, are rarely inspired by sincere contrition for sin, but rather by sudden realisation of penalty.

Note:

i. *Sinners often have clear recollection of God's marvellous works.* These men had. At the prayer of Isaiah God delivered Jerusalem when Sennacherib besieged it (2 Chron. xxxii. 20–21). And as they have clear recollections, so often they have

ii. *Strange expectations of like merciful interpositions* on their own behalf. Doubtless these messengers anticipated for Jeremiah a similar answer to that which Isaiah gave (Isa. xxxvii. 6). But

iii. *God always keeps vivid recognition of men's sinful ways.* And He makes a difference accordingly. So that "His wondrous works" are not repeated to men who deserved, not wondrous deliverances, but wondrous judgments.

See *Addenda:* SEEKING COUNSEL.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* INTREPID DENUNCIATIONS. "Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah."

Since the days of Jehoiakim, under whose reign Jeremiah betrayed much fickleness, temerity, and repining; of all which the previous chapter (xx.) furnishes too ample proof—what a change has come upon God's servant! How altered *now* is the tone of his address. Regard this reply as evidence of

I. **Great personal courage.** Note the circumstances:

1. He is *confronted with men of highest state dignity.* This embassy was chosen from among the foremost officers in the ranks of the priesthood, so that Jeremiah had to address men of pride and power.

2. He has to send *a message direct to the king.* His words are "to *Zedekiah.*" He is under special temptation therefore to be apprehensive of royal disfavour, and concerned to be conciliatory.

3. He is *for the first time sought as state-adviser.* Never before had he been recognised by king and princes in this special manner as God's vicegerent and oracle. They had heretofore "derided" him (xx. 7, 8). Now he is treated with highest respect: an embassy of marked importance is sent him; he is consulted at a crucial moment on a matter of vast seriousness—would he *accept the flattery*, and *prize the sweet gratification so highly*, as to lead him to *mild speech* and even *partial suppression* of his message! (Compare xx. 9.) No: he spoke out all God's word, forcibly and fearlessly, and sent back these powerful messengers to the king with burning words of denunciation.

II. **Grand prophetic confidence.**

1. *He is conscious of the Divinity of his inspiration.* Had he been in any doubt that God's Spirit moved him as he spake, he would certainly have spoken with more deference and some equivocation. But his words are decisive and authoritative. He knew that he had God's word to utter. So as truly do preachers of Divine truth.

Here, too, let it be noted that the coming of this embassy to him was "a silent testimony and tribute to his inspiration" (*Wordsworth*). They accepted the fact as undoubted: and came to ask God's word at his lips.

2. *He is confident of the certainty of his prophecies.* The moment was critical. The Chaldeans were at the walls, the city was besieged, the mes-

sage was for that very hour. What he said would be *verified or refuted* forthwith. It was different when a prophecy was being uttered which related to distant days. Yet though a few hours would suffice to prove or disprove his words, Jeremiah spoke with emphasis and confidence. He risks his credit as a prophet on the assurance he sends back, that if the king would promptly execute judgment and justice, the besiegers should be thwarted (ver. 12). We have reason to believe that had Zedekiah acted on Jeremiah's counsel he would have been saved from the Chaldeans as Hezekiah was from the Assyrians.

Note:

i. This progress from temerity (chap. i. 6) to courage was *the progressively of God's promise of qualification* for his work. (See chap. i. 17, 18.) It was only *progressively* fulfilled, for often the prophet showed a craven spirit (xx. 7–9); but now it was *completely* fulfilled. So God's words of promise will find ultimate vindication in us.

ii. This development of courage and confidence marks *the perfection of his prophetic equipment.* Jeremiah's sorest testing was at hand; in the travail and calamities which accumulated, he would need now the full confidence and fearless courage which here *for the first time* he evinced. God knows the hour when we need largest grace, and "as our day is, so shall our strength be."

See *Addenda:* COURAGE.

Ver. 8. *Theme:* A PITIABLE DILEMMA. "I have set before thee the way of life and death."

In this instance how different the circumstances amid which Jeremiah made this appeal from those amid which Moses used the same words! (Deut. xxx. 19.) Here it is—

I. Not a gracious contrast: "Life and death."

It *was* a gracious contrast that Moses proposed: a choice between

1. A life blessed with Jehovah's favour; or

2. A death in sin and the miseries which follow disobedience.

But that propitious hour for the nation was gone for ever. The offer could not be made on those beneficent terms. "They had slighted the life" (says *Henry*) "which would have made them truly happy; to upbraid them with which the prophet uses the same expression."

Note: *The same offer may not mean the same* when it is renewed, after it has once been rejected.

II. But a melancholy alternative.

Here the choice lay between two possibilities well-nigh equally distressing.

1. A life only saved by deserting to the enemy, and to be spent in wretched and shameful captivity; or

2. A death of famine, pestilence, and the sword within their own city's walls.

See *Addenda:* OPPORTUNITY.

Theme: A FAITHFUL MINISTER'S APPEAL.

It ought to be possible for every messenger of God to say among his people that during his ministry he has persistently and faithfully "set before them life and death."

I. This summarises the preacher's work.

1. *The alternative which God offers to men through the preacher*—"life and death."

2. *The fidelity which marks the preacher's messages to men.* "I have set before you." Not engaging you with speculative theories, but solemn truths and revealed facts.

II. This indicates the hearer's duty.

1. *A free choice is left to each* (Ezek. xxxiii. 11).

2. *A wise choice is possible with each* (Prov. viii. 36; Luke x. 42).

III. This narrows the sinner's outlook.

1. *There are but two possibilities before the soul:* no third course.

2. *There are great responsibilities upon the soul* (John xv. 22).

See further: NOTICEABLE TOPICS at end of chapter.

Vers. 11, 12. *Theme:* COUNSEL TO A KING.

Because it was the king who sent the message to him, he sends a particular message to the king. He advises the

king and princes to reform, and to make conscience of the duty from their place. "*Execute judgment in the morning*"—carefully, diligently, promptly. "*Deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor*"—if you would be delivered from the Chaldeans who distress you.

i. *This intimates that it was their neglect to do their duty which brought all this desolation upon the people.* The "evil of their doings" kindled the fire of God's wrath.

ii. *This directs them to take the right direction for a national reformation.* The princes must begin and set the people a good example. He reminds them that they are of the "house of David," and therefore should tread in his righteous steps.

iii. *This gives them some encouragement to hope that there may yet be a lengthening of their tranquillity* (Deut. iv. 27). If anything will recover their state from the brink of ruin, this will.—*M. Henry.*

See *Addenda:* "EXECUTE JUDGMENT."

NOTICEABLE TOPIC IN CHAPTER XXI.

Topic: GOD'S MESSAGE OF LIFE AND DEATH (ver. 8).

The conduct of God towards Israel is the model of His conduct towards us: and the conduct of Israel towards God closely resembles the conduct of mankind in all subsequent ages. Here is a glass in which we may see ourselves revealed.

When Nebuchadnezzar advanced to the siege, the state dignitaries urged Jeremiah to inquire of God for them what the result would be. He did so. And this was the answer—*Life in submission to the Chaldeans: death by continuance in the city.* The result was—they despised the warning, they clung to their own devices—the city was destroyed.

(*a.*) *Many learn religion's worth* amid threatening or actual calamities.

(*b.*) *Many prize the comfort of the prayers of God's people* who never pray themselves.

I. That it is God's prerogative to mark the path in which He would have us go for both worlds. God who knows our wants has provided for their supply.

He has "set before us life and death."

1. *In His written Word*—i. By doctrinal statements. ii. By warnings and invitations.

2. *By Providence and mercies:* examples and instances.

The way *to heaven* is faith and holiness, the way to *hell* is unbelief and sin. Jesus says (Mark xvi. 16). John, bearing witness to the Divinity and Messiahship of Christ, says (John iii. 36). Our Lord also declares concerning Himself in terms too plain to be misunderstood (John xiv. 6).

It is evident that all who receive Christ by faith—in His atoning sacrifice and sanctifying grace—are in the way of life: and all those who reject and disown Him—refuse His salvation and disobey His commands—are in the way of death.

II. That the path to life is clothed with many attractions.

Our Lord speaks of "the strait gate and narrow way," and the "few that find it." The difficulty arises not from the road itself, but from the nature of those who walk in it. It is

1. *A plain way.* The way though narrow is plain—the way to the wicket gate is straight as a line can make it. It is only difficult and perplexed to those who are reluctant to renounce the burden of their sins and the corruptions of this evil world, or would fain invent some method to reconcile the discordant claims of God and mammon, earth and heaven. But though the first entrance may be difficult to the awakened sinner, owing to the abounding evils of his heart, yet grace enables him to overcome these deep workings of corruption and to pass by true repentance and humble faith through the strait gate towards the blessed region of eternal felicity.

Both of these paths have numerous travellers—but the broad way and the

guest have had a fearful majority hitherto. Yet the votaries of religion have not been few in reality, though few as compared with the world—and in every age the number of these has increased, and will increase. Of the path to heaven observe

2. *That it is an old way and well trodden.* "Stand ye in the old way, inquire for the good paths." From Abel's time. "The way the holy prophets went."

3. *That it is a safe way:* for though much contested it is yet divinely guarded: "No lion shall be there." "No weapon," &c.

4. *That it is a pleasant way.* "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness." "The way of life is above to the wise," &c.

III. That we are daily advancing in one or other of these paths.

There can be amidst the diversities of the race but two broad divisions: wise and foolish, wheat and tares.

God sees how you forget Him and your latter end, and how light you make of everlasting things: how bold you are in sin, how fearless of His threatenings—careless of your souls—doing the work of infidels in your lives while the creed of Christians is in your mouth. He sees the dreadful day near at hand when your sorrows will begin. "*Behold the judge standeth.*" Death will bring such an argument in favour of truth and religion as you will never be able to answer, and then you will be an unbeliever no longer. There is nothing but a slender veil of flesh between thee and that amazing sight of God and eternity which will silence your presumption for ever. But let us mark the contrast between the righteous and the wicked in present life.

A worldly man is one that has his chief treasure upon earth, while God and eternity are forgotten. Though he does not say that earth is better than heaven, and sin than holiness, he acts as if he did; and if he could have enough of earth and time he would let go heaven, and never think of being removed thither—for a holy God and a holy heaven have never been comprehended within the circle of his joys. Whereas *the Christian* is one who has been converted from the error of his ways—his mind has been enlightened to discern the evil of sin and the love and loveliness of Christ, and is anxious to lay up his treasure and hopes in heaven.

A worldly man is one who neglects the great salvation, who never truly valued the mystery of redemption, nor truly applied to the Physician of souls, nor thankfully entertained in his heart the great Redeemer; and though he might not object to be outwardly religious, he was never concerned to be inwardly renewed, neither seeking to be delivered from the guilt and dominion of sin, nor to be conformed to the image and likeness of God. Whereas *the Christian*, having been savingly convinced of his undone state by sin, and apprehending the mercy of God in Christ, thankfully entertains the glad tidings of redemption, flees to Christ for pardon and salvation—desires to experience more the daily renewal of the Holy Spirit.

To which of these do you belong? Think thus;—I am a dying creature, on the verge of an awful eternity; heaven and hell are before me, and to one of these states I am advancing every day as another day's journey. Ask, Whither am I going? What reception shall I meet at last? What award does conscience now make? Have I believed with the heart unto righteousness? Is the life I now live in the flesh a life of faith? Will the course I am in do to die by?

IV. That the doom of the impenitent will be aggravated by weighty considerations.

1. *That the path of life and death was clearly set before you, and rejected by deliberate choice.* It will be eternally true that Christ was set forth crucified, that you were invited, summoned, and entreated in His name to be reconciled to God. God Himself calls

2. *From the solemn Providences and warnings you have abused.*

3. *From the vanity and worthlessness of pursuits for which salvation was rejected.*

4. *From the changeless eternity of the state to which you go.*

—*Samuel Thodey*, A.D. 1845.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XXI.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS

Ver. 2. SEEKING COUNSEL.

"Consult your friend on all things, especially on those which respect yourself. His counsel may then be useful, where your own self-love might impair your judgment."—*Seneca.*

"Good counsels observed are chains to grace."—*Fuller.*

"Mid pleasure plenty, and success,
Freely we take from Him who lends:
We boast the blessings we possess,
Yet scarcely thank the One who sends.

"But let affliction pour its smart,
How soon we quail beneath the rod!
With shattered pride, and prostrate heart,
We seek the long-forgotten God."
—*Eliza Cook.*

Ver. 3. COURAGE.

"A minister without boldness is like a smooth file, a knife without an edge, a sentinel that is afraid to let off his gun. If men will be bold in sin, ministers must be bold to reprove."
—*Gurnall.*

Think of that Reformer, who, when some one said to him, "The whole world is against you," calmly replied, "Then I am against the world."

"This is true courage, not the brutal force
Of vulgar heroes, but the firm resolve
Of virtue and of reason."—*Whitehead.*

"True valour
Lies in the mind, the never-yielding purpose,
Nor owns the blind award of giddy fortune."
—*Thomson.*

Ver. 8. OPPORTUNITY.

"The mill cannot grind with the water that is past."—*Proverb.*

Herod—those who offered to follow Christ (Luke ix. 57–62) — Felix—Agrippa — Simon Magus — how many characters seem to flash before our eyes in Scripture as having been visited with convictions and opportunities of grace, but only, it has been said, "like ships, which, when night is spread over the sea, emerge for a moment from the darkness as they cross the pathway of the moonbeams, and then are lost in utter gloom."

Opportunities are importunities.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows, and in miseries;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures."—*Shakespeare.*

Ver. 12. EXECUTE JUDGMENT.

"What is justice? To give to every man his own."—*Aristotle.*

"It often falls in course of common life,
That right sometimes is overborne of wrong;
The avarice of power, or guile, or strife,
That weakens her, and makes her party strong.
But Justice, tho' her doom she do prolong,
Yet at the last will make her own cause rife."—*Spenser.*

CHAPTER XXII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. Early in Jehoiakim's reign; contemporary with chap. xvii. See Notes. Dr. *Payne Smith* places this prophecy prior to Jehoiakim's manifestation of the violence of his character by murdering Urijah (chap. xxvi. 23), and thus synchronous with chap. xvii. 19–27. Its appeal to the house of David is conditioned on the fact that the nation's ruin might yet be averted. *The chapter divides itself into four chronological sections.* Vers. 1-9: Early in *Jehoiakim's* reign. Vers. 10–12: Immediately following the deposition and captivity of *Jehoahaz.* Vers. 14–19: *Jehoiakim's* reign again; but towards the close of his wicked rule. Vers. 20–30 belong to *Jeconiah's* reign, for the reference (ver. 24) indicates him as the then reigning king. *Cf. Personal Allusions* below.

For 2. Contemporary Scriptures; 3. National Affairs; 4. Contemporaneous History, see Notes on chaps. vii. and xvii.

5. Geographical References.—Ver. 6. "*Gilead*"—*Vide* note on viii. 22. "*Lebanon*"—the loftiest height of Lebanon is about 10,000 feet above the level of the sea. *Vide* note on xviii. 14. Ver. 20. "*Bashan, and the passages:*" *i.e.*, the route from Jerusalem to Babylon. "Passages" should be *Abarim*, a range of mountains south of Gilead, opposite Jericho. Those mountains, *Lebanon, Bashan, and Abarim*, overlook the course the captives would take.

6. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 11. "*Shallum, the son of Josiah.*" Shallum is the same as

Jehoahaz, Josiah's second son. Although younger than Eliakim (afterwards called Jehoiakim), he was yet raised to the throne by the acclaim of the people (2 Kings xxiii. 30–36), the rights of primogeniture being disregarded owing to the evil character of Eliakim. (Comp. *Personal Allusions* chap. i.) Shallum reigned only three months: for Eliakim, indignant at this usurpation, threw himself into the arms of the Egyptians; and Pharaoh-Necho deposed Jehoahaz and placed Jehoiakim (Eliakim) on the throne as tributary and dependent king. *Shallum* was thereupon carried into Egypt, and from that time is heard of no more. (Comp. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 1–4; Ezek. xix. 3–4.)

Ver. 18. "*Jehoiakim, son of Josiah:*" see note above, also note to chap. i. (Comp. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 5, 6.) We have no record of his death; but from this prophecy (repeated in chap. xxxvi. 30) we may suppose that he died soon after he reached Babylon, died under his chains, probably "of pestilence or of a broken heart" (*Payne Smith*), and his body was dragged away without any show of respect. It is just as probable that he was slain by Nebuchadnezzar on his retreat to Babylon, and that his corpse was left unburied by the wayside outside Jerusalem. Certainly, however, he perished miserably, and at the age of thirty-six.

Ver. 24. "*Coniah, son of Jehoiakim:*" This was *Jehoiachin*. He reigned only three months and ten days. He was eighteen years of age (according to 2 Kings xxiv. 8) when crowned, but only eight according to 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9—which is probably a corruption of the text. He remained in Babylon a captive during thirty-six years, the lifetime of Nebuchadnezzar; but when Evil-Merodach succeeded Nebuchadnezzar he was considerately raised by that king to some show of dignity and personal regard (2 Kings xxv. 27-30; Jer. lii. 31–34). Ezekiel dated his prophecies by the year "of king Jehoiachin's captivity" (Ezek. i. 2, viii. 1, xxiv. 1, &c.) An exciting expectation prevailed among the Jews four years after Jeconiah's removal to Babylon (Jer. xxviii. 4) that he would quickly return to power; but this was probably a rumour created by the sanguine hopes and conversation of the Jewish captives at Babylon.

Ver. 26. "*Thy mother that bare thee.*" Nehushta; see chronological note to chap. xiii.

7. Natural History—none.

8. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 10. "*Weep ye not for the dead,*" &c. An annual lamentation had been celebrated by the nation for good king Josiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 25). This custom might now be used for one who needed the bemoaning more—his son Shallum.

Ver. 14. "*Ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion.*" Jehoiakim's palace was gorgeously adorned with "cedars" of Lebanon. The "vermilion" was not like ours, a preparation of red lead, but a compound of quicksilver and sulphur; a preparation much valued by Orientals.

9. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 7. "*I will prepare destroyers:*" *i.e.*, *consecrate.* (*Vide* note, chap. vi. 4.)

Ver. 14. "*A wide house:*" בֵּית מִדּוֹת, lit., a house of extensions: (comp. Numb. xiii. 32; Isa. xlv. 14), where מִדּוֹת is rendered "stature"—men of large proportions. "A *spacious* house." "*Large chambers,*" from רָוַח, *to breathe:* airy chambers.

"*And* it is *ceiled with cedars:*" סָפַן; either *roofing* it with cedars (*Payne Smith*), or *inlaying* it (*Hitzig, Graf.*, &c.)

Ver. 15. "*Closest* thyself *in cedar.*" Various reading. The LXX., *Codex Alex.*, and *Ewald* give *viest with Ahaz:* for Ahaz did build the palace (1 Kings xxii. 39). But the literal rendering of received text is, *viest in cedar-work.*

Ver. 19. "*Beyond the gates*"—afar from.

Ver. 20. "*The Passages.*" See *Geog. Ref. supra*, Abarim, a range of mountains.

Ver. 23. "*O inhabitant of Lebanon:*" inhabitress. "*How gracious shalt thou be:*" how wilt thou *sigh* (*Hitzig, Ewald, Graf*); how wilt thou *groan* (*Lange, Payne Smith*), *be pitiable* (*Gesenius*).

Ver. 27. "*Desire to return:*" lift up their soul to return. Our English equivalent is "set their heart upon."

Ver. 28. "*A despised broken idol:*" lit., piece of work, a vessel, a piece of common earthenware in which the potter has no interest.

HOMILETIC SURVEY OF CHAPTER XXII.

Theme: The Errors and the Doom of Judah's Kings.

The chapter separates itself into four prophetic messages, containing sentences of judgment on Jehoahaz (Shallum), Jehoiakim, and Jeconiah. Chronological order of events is disregarded in the grouping of these prophecies; but *similarity of subject* rules. Connecting chapter xxi. 11—end with chap. xxii., *the last four kings of Judah are arraigned for judgment.* Each is proved to have *utterly failed in righteousness*, and on each is pronounced the *sorrowful denunciation* which his impiety invoked.

I. An exhortation to righteous reforms. Addressed to Jehoiakim, probably quickly after his accession to the throne, he is charged, in the name of Jehovah

(ver. 3)—himself, his ministers, and his people—to act aright, to administer **justice**, and eschew all wrong. This appeal is emphasised with an encouraging ***promise of prosperity*** upon obedience (ver. 4), and alarming ***warnings of desolation*** if disregarded (ver. 5-9).

II. A mournful instance of judgment. The prophet cites the fate of Shallum (Jehoahaz), the predecessor of Jehoiakim, as confirmatory of Jehovah's warnings. On his accession Shallum assumed the name "Jehoahaz," meaning "Jehovah sustains," but Jeremiah refuses to call him by that name, and writes him down in irony as "Shallum," meaning "retribution"—which had verified its appropriateness in the king's fate—deposed after three months' reign, and now a captive in Egypt, never more to behold his native land. ***So soon may a king be dethroned, so hopelessly may an exile be banished*** (ver. 10-12).

See *Addenda:* WEEP NOT FOR THE DEAD.

III. A rebuke of ambitious tyranny. Reverting to Jehoiakim (ver. 13), and proceeding openly and indignantly to name him as the criminal (ver. 18), God denounces him for his ***vainglory*** (ver. 14), his ***injustice*** (ver. 13), his ***covetousness and cruelty*** (ver. 17). Against him the "woe" (ver. 13) is uttered; he is ***derided for his false confidence*** (vers. 15, 16) in thinking that his throne is secured by vaunting display of splendour rather than in righteous administration; and his miserable degradation is proclaimed (ver. 18, 19).

IV. A lamentation over Judah's ruin. Jeremiah 1. *appeals to Jerusalem*, whom he personifies as a sorrowing woman, to ascend the mountains which overlook the route her captives would take on being carried into Babylon, and bewail her calamity. 2. *Threatens Jeconiah* (here called Coniah as if in contempt); who, although he was ***idolised by his people*** (vers. 24–28), would nevertheless be ***treated with violence*** (vers. 26–28), ***carried into exile*** (ver. 25), and with him would ***end the royal honours of his house*** (ver. 30).

GENERAL TRUTHS SUGGESTED BY THE CHAPTER.

I. Perpetuity and prosperity are conditional upon righteousness. This holds good for *nations and governments* (ver. 4), *cities* (vers. 8, 9), *individuals* (vers. 11, 19, 30).

"The most effectual way to preserve the dignity of the government is to do the duty of it."—*Henry.* "God does not spare even the authorities, for though He has said that they are as 'gods,' yet when they do not rightly administer their office they must die like men (Ps. lxxxii. 6). No cedars are too high for God. No splendours too mighty; He can destroy all at once, and overturn, overturn, overturn" (Ezek. xxi. 27).—*Cramer.* Sin will be the ruin of the house of princes as well as of meaner men. Even in this world God often makes it clear that He destroys neither nations, cities, nor persons, except for sin; and it will be made clearer in the day of judgment.

II. Advantages and exaltation secure no exception from doom. "The house of the kings of Judah" enjoyed *historic dignity and the Divine benignity* (ver. 6): Jerusalem also (addressed in vers. 20–23) had enjoyed "*prosperity*" (ver. 21) and *material splendour* (ver. 23); whereas Jeconiah had seemed peculiarly *secure and honoured* (ver. 24). Yet that *house of Judah became a desolation* (ver. 5); *Jerusalem was dethroned* (vers. 8, 9); and "*confounded for her wickedness*" (ver. 22); and *Coniah was cut off from royalty* (ver. 30).

"See how easily God's judgments can ruin a nation, and how certainly sin will do it."—*Henry.* How little is earthly grandeur to be depended upon, or flourishing families to be rejoiced in! Notwithstanding the privileges of a man's birth (as with Coniah), if he make himself unworthy of honour, God will cast him off. Yet "God never casts any off until they first cast Him off" (*Henry* on ver. 9). Here, however, may be seen "how perverse and unjustifiable is the illusion that

God's election is a surety against His anger, and a licence to any wilfulness."—*Naegelsbach.*

III. Spoliation and punishment are varied according to individual sin. Numerous are the resources of Divine judgment. God "*prepares the destroyers*, every one with his weapons" (ver. 7). And *He determines the form of desolation* upon individual transgressors. *Shallum* is doomed to *perpetual bondage: Jehoiakim* is punished with an unlamented death and contemptible burial—*a most despicable end* (vers. 18, 19). *Jeconiah*, whom the nation had idolised and cherished with "pleasure," should become *despised by his people* (28), and be *written childless* (ver. 30).

They expose themselves to fearful possibilities and perils who live in hostility to God. No life is secure from calamity which is not "hid with Christ in God."

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XXII.

Vers. 1–5. *Theme:* THE CONDITIONS OF CONTINUANCE IN PRIVILEGE.

Hereditary rights, royal prerogatives, are valueless as guarantees of prolonged existence and prosperity as a nation. Righteousness alone protects and preserves governments from overthrow and peoples from extinction. So with a *church:* it must be and do right, or Christ "will remove the candlestick," &c. So with the *soul:* it must faithfully serve and loyally follow Christ, or it forfeits grace.

This message to *Jehoiakim* is similar in import to that sent to *Zedekiah* (xxi. 11–14). See Homilies *in loc.*

Matthew Henry's arrangement of this section is—

i. *Orders given to Jeremiah to preach before the king.*

He is to go in person and demand the king's attention to a message from the King of kings.

ii. *Instructions given him what to preach.*

1. He must tell them what was their duty (ver. 3). (*a.*) Do all the good they can with the power they have. (*b.*) Do no hurt with it.

2. He must assure them that the faithful discharge of their duty would advance and secure their prosperity (ver. 4).

3. Likewise that the iniquity of their family if persisted in would be the ruin of their family, though it was a royal family (ver. 5).

4. He must show how fatal their wickedness would be to their kingdom as well as to themselves—to Jerusalem especially, the royal city (vers. 6–9).

Ver. 6. *Theme:* BEAUTY AND MAJESTY DEGRADED.

I. Significant imagery. "Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon."

i. *The meaning of these natural metaphors.* They suggest

1. *Graceful fertility.* "Gilead" was the poetic symbol of this. Dr. Payne Smith notes that it is "extolled for its aromatic plants (chap. viii. 22), its grassy uplands where the goats feed (Song Sol. iv. 1, vi. 5), and one district of it, Bashan, for its sheep (Deut. xxxii. 14), its noble breed of cattle (Ps. xxii. 12), its general fertility (Isa. xxxiii. 9), and especially for its splendid oak forests (Isa. ii. 13; Zech. xi. 2)."

2. *Surpassing magnificence.* "Lebanon" is the metaphor of this. It is the frequent figure for grandeur. "It is praised for its snows (chap. xviii. 14), its firs and cedars (Isa. xxxvii. 24), its waving forests (Ps. lxxii. 16), its wealth of springs (Song Sol. iv. 15), its flowers (Nahum i. 4), and its sweet scents (Song Sol. iv. 11; Hos. xiv. 6, 7)."

ii. *The reference of this metaphorical address.*

1. *Primarily to the royal house of David.*

2. *By analogy to the "royal priesthood" of Christian believers.* The Church is in God's esteem "the perfection of beauty."

3. *By direct application to the individual Christian.* "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ." Every Christian should combine in himself *beauteous fertility* and *incomparable majesty*—nobleness of character and life.

II. Startling degradation. "Yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, cities which are not inhabited."

1. *Its incredibility* necessitates that *God affirms it with an oath*, "Surely I will." Literally this is, "If I make thee not," &c.

1. *The threatening creates an involuntary recoil.* We reply to it—"Surely it can never be so!" The old Jews revolted from the idea that their royal "house of David" could ever become "a desolation" (ver. 5). We recoil from the idea that on a *Christian church* there could ever be inscribed "Ichabod!" Or that *a godly soul*, a privileged disciple of Jesus, could ever become a "cast-away." Yet God corrects *our* "*Surely* it cannot be" with *His* "*Surely* I will!"

2. *The threatening seems a total impossibility.* The Jews believed in the perpetuity of the Davidic line and the continuance of their national prosperity. So we think of a *church* and of *ourselves*. But for the church see Lam. i. 1, and Zeph. ii. 15; and for the *individual*, 1 Cor. x. 12.

Vers. 8, 9. Comp. chaps. xviii. 15, 16; xix. 8.

Ver. 10. *Theme:* DEATH PREFERABLE TO LIFE. "Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away," &c.

Less reason for tears over Josiah, the righteous father who is dead, than over Jehoahaz, the ungodly son, who, though alive, is yet worse than dead, being banished from all the blessings of life; and who goes away not as his father to the land of rest and joy, but to captivity and dishonour.

I. Death may prove a gracious goal. It was to *Josiah*. *Mors janua vitæ*. "Death is the gate of life." Of course *only* to the godly. Blessed as life is to the Christian, yet "*to die is gain*." Here is a test which divides the ranks of the living. To which of us would death be an advantage—knowing as we do what awaits souls "after death"?

1. *Death terminates much that makes life so sad.*

(1.) *Personal sorrows:* physical weaknesses, earthly deceits, life's cares, struggles with adversity, the risks and delusions incident to all effort and enterprise here, wearying toils.

(2.) *Social troubles:* misunderstandings and misinterpretations, disappointments and grievances, the anguish over wayward children, the pangs over false friendships and unrequited kindness: desolating bereavements.

(3.) *National distresses:* so much wounds our patriotism, and urges the outcry, "O for a lodge in some vast wilderness," &c. (Jer. ix. 2).

(4.) *Spiritual anxieties:* conflicts with "besetting sins," a wayward heart, the world's seductions, &c., grief over disobedience to God, forgetfulness of Divine love, &c.

"I would not live alway." "I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

2. *Death commences much that makes life so glad.*

(1.) *Heaven won:* "to go no more out." "Neither sorrow, nor crying," &c.

(2.) Deity beheld in open vision. "We shall see Him as He is."

(3.) *Earth's mysteries solved.* "Now we know in part, but then shall we know," &c.

(4.) *Lost ones regained.* "I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me."

(5.) *The perfect life attained.* "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness."

II. Life may prove a grievous path. It would to *Shallum*.

1. *Its pleasures all desolated.* Jehoahaz would pine in captivity. Think of

(1.) *The invasions of disaster or death.* Remember what pestilence and accident have done for once happy families.

(2.) *Young lives early blighted:* afflicted, crippled, &c.

(3.) *Hearts ruthlessly broken:* by falsity of lovers, by desertion of relatives, by disgraces brought upon homes through recklessness or wickedness of fathers or sons.

(4.) *Losses irretrievably suffered.* Change in fortune: children hurled by reverses into penury, &c.

2. *Its possibilities all devastated.*

(1.) *Character or virtue wrecked.* By one criminal indulgence or act confidence

may be forfeited, the door of promotion be closed, and honour exchanged for a career of shame.

(2.) *Powers suddenly smitten or withered.* The right hand may lose its cunning, the mind its balance, &c.

3. *Its prospects all destroyed.*

(1.) *An irreligious career*, life's years spent in *practical* ungodliness, destroys the soul's prospects. For *sin* darkens the soul, and divorces it from all present peace and gracious anticipations, and *impenitence* shuts out the soul from the redemption of Christ and reconciliation with God.

(2.) *An atheistic mind*, the abandonment of revelation, the rejection of the Bible, the denial of God and spiritual things: these cover the soul and its outlook with a dense and desolating gloom.

Rather than such a life, "let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Theme: THE DEAD LESS MOURNED THAN THE LIVING.

I. **Evil times** enforce this truth. They are "taken away from the evil." When war or desolation come upon the *land*, or disaster upon the *home*, we think this.

II. **Wicked careers** emphasise the truth. The *living Cain* more a grief than the *dead Abel*. We mourn less for the "dead" though we loved them dearly, than for the living who violate all our hopes, and fill us with grief and shame.

III. **Divine revelation** elucidates the truth. For "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, they *rest from their labours*," &c. See Scriptures which exhibit the future of the redeemed, as contrasted with our lot on earth.

See *Addenda:* "WEEP NOT FOR THE DEAD."

Note:

"Dying saints," says *Henry*, "may be justly envied, while living sinners are justly pitied. And so dismal perhaps the prospects of the times may be, that tears even for a Josiah, even for a Jesus, must be restrained, that they may be reserved for ourselves and our children (Luke xxiii. 28)."

See Further, *Noticeable Topics:* "GRIEF FOR THOSE WHO HAVE GONE AWAY TO WAR."

Ver. 13. *Theme:* RAPACITY DENOUNCED.

See *Addenda:* COVETOUSNESS.

"He who builds his house with other people's property, collects stones for his grave."—*Cramer.*

"*Sepulchri immemor struis domos.*"—*Horat.*

"Though impoverished by the tribute imposed upon them by the king of Egypt (2 Chron. xxxvi. 3), the inhabitants were cruelly ground by Jehoiakim, who scrupled not at the adoption of any measures by which he might be able to carry on the building of a large and splendid palace."—*Henderson.*

Not only did Jehoiakim tax the people (2 Kings xxiii. 25) for Pharaoh's tribute, but also took their forced labour without pay for building a splendid palace; in violation of Lev. xix. 13; Deut. xxiv. 14, 15.

"God will repay in justice those who will not in justice pay those whom they employ."—*Henry.*

"Jehoiakim lived in splendour amid the misery of the nation, amused himself with building palaces when the whole land was ground down by heavy taxation, and miserably perished at the age of thirty-six, so little cared for that his body was cast aside without burial."—*Payne Smith.*

Vers. 15, 16. *Theme:* JEHOIAKIM'S DEGENERACY FROM HIS FATHER'S PIETY.

Jehoiakim's character given (ver. 13 *seq.*) He a young prince, son of pious father, degenerated; hence God sent awful message in text by Jeremiah. Woe denounced upon him for pride, &c., when nation in distress (vers. 13, 14). Then God expostulates; wickedness aggravated and inexcusable, because of bright example of piety and righteousness in his father (vers. 15, 16).

I. **God remembereth the piety and usefulness of our ancestors, and observeth how far we resemble them** (vers. 15, 16; contrast ver. 17).

1. *God can forget nothing.* Past,

present, "all naked and open." (1.) Remembers *piety of our fathers.* As Josiah. Kind remembrance of His faithful servants after left this world: "not unrighteous to forget," &c. (2.) Instructive to observe with *how much respect God mentions* those who have been upright before Him. Thus "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness;" treats good men as favourites. (3.) This a great *encouragement to be religious:* enjoy favour while here, and our memory precious in His sight when forgotten by survivors. (4.) Motive to all, especially children of pious parents, to *reverence* the memory of saints.

2. *God takes notice how far we resemble them.* Charges Jehoiakim that trod not in father's steps. (1.) God makes just estimates of our religious advantages and *our improvement of* them. (2.) Observes *declension.* (3.) Whether our hearts be right as our father's were, *e.g.*, Timothy (2 Tim. i. 5), or whether as Solomon (1 Kings xi. 4–6). (4.) An *incentive to utmost caution:* not cast off the entail of religion, lose truest hereditary honours, involve Divine displeasure.

II. Young persons often forsake the religion of their fathers through pride and love of elegance, pomp, and show (ver. 15). Pride led him to covet splendour and practise injustice.

This sin easily besets and ensnares the young. They scorn their father's lowliness. Begin with extravagance greater than where their wiser fathers ended. (1.) It leads them to *forsake their father's religious profession.* Favours and preferments of the world are not on that side. Count their father's religion narrow, and abandon their principles. (2.) Love of pomp and elegance lead to the *loss of the life and power of godliness.* Luxury and irreligion (ver. 13), practices their fathers would have abhorred. Go from bad to worse: as Jehoiakim, oppressed Jeremiah and slew Uzziah (Jer. xxvi. 21). Won an ill character (Ezek. xix. 6, 7).

To the young: Set out in life with moderate desires. Be content with your rank. Strengthen religious dispositions. "Do justice and mercy." Humility the brighest ornament; religion the defence of the soul.

III. It is a great dishonour and reproach to any to forsake the good ways of their fathers. Jehoiakim was over twenty when Josiah died. God intimates that his conduct was both dishonourable and inexcusable.

1. Religiously trained as he doubtless was, his forsaking religion was a reproach. The good example of our fathers aggravates our guilt and shame. 2. Let young persons *consider the usefulness and honour* for which their parents were eminent. Was it not "well with them"? They were beloved and lamented (ver. 18). 3. Consider *for what* it is that so many forsake the good ways of their fathers. 4. Here are *terrible threatenings from God* against this wickedness (ver. 19, also xxxvi. 30). Forsake religion of ancestors, it will be your shame. "If thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever."

IV. The way of religion is the way of wisdom, honour, and happiness.

1. *Wisdom.* Jehoiakim thought himself wise in "building," &c. His father was a good man and good king, and "*was not this to know Me?*" (ver. 16); Ps. cxi. 10; 1 John i. 3, 4. Right knowledge consists in being religious.

2. *Honour.* Josiah universally esteemed (2 Chron. xxxv. 25). Luxury and splendour do not secure honour (Prov. iii. 3, 4).

3. *Happiness.* "Well with him" (ver. 15); repeated (ver. 16). Over against this the young prince is asked, "Shalt thou reign because, &c.?" (ver. 15). Piety and righteousness a surer foundation and defence.

Way to be happy is to be and do good. While we do well, it will be well with us (Ps. xxxiv. 12; 1 Tim. iv. 8).

(Abstract of Sermon, by *Rev. Job Orton*, Kidderminster, A.D. 1775).

Ver. 18. *Theme:* A PERVERSE SON. "Thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah."

That godly men should have ungodly children is a problem hard to solve

Josiah had both a Shallum and a Jehoiakim, both wicked men; David, Absalom, a rebellious son; Eli, Hophni and Phineas, "both sons of Belial that knew not the Lord."

I. Parental discipline and proper training are suggested as lacking. Stress is laid on the proverb, "Train up a child," &c. But this assumes without proof

1. That in these instances there was a lack of parental discipline and proper training.

2. That piety in children is the natural result of parental discipline and proper training.

But what are the facts of the case?

(*a.*) Piety is sometimes found in the children of godless parents, where there has been no religious training at all; whereas

(*b.*) Impiety will sometimes be seen in the children of godly parents, who have striven to bring them up in the fear of the Lord.

Such facts teach that *youthful piety* is not the *natural* result of early training; and the mystery of the entire subject is left unsolved.

II. Religious education does not always form a religious character. Religious *habits* may be formed without the *vital principle* of religion possessing the heart.

What is the reason why a child cannot be trained to be a Christian?

1. Because to *become a Christian* is to have a new nature, a *new life*, which no training can originate. Nothing can be *trained* except *what has life*. None can train a dead vine or dead tree. Training supposes life.

2. *No child has by nature religious life*, but only mental and moral life; and a child can only be trained mentally to think, morally to act.

III. It is God's prerogative to quicken our children to newness of life.

Parental duty it is to *train* children: but equally their duty to *pray* that God would impart the life of real religion, that life without which a correct creed and a cold morality leave the soul "dead in sins." If parents see in their children the germ of the new life, this is *God's handiwork*, and the pledge for the children of a life of grace and a glorious destiny.—*D. Pledge.*

Ver. 19. *Theme:* AN IGNOMINIOUS BURIAL.

The end of some men is very different from what might have been expected, considering their parentage, education, and advantages.

Jehoiakim was the son of *a king:* naturally suppose that he also would be buried with the pageantry of a prince.

Also the son of *a pious father:* might have hoped his death had been the death of the righteous.

Sin brings men to an ignominious end.

1. *What a blighting thing is sin!* Blasts every fond hope. When Jehoiakim was a youth he had fairest earthly prospects; yet what degradation befel him!

2. *A degraded burial is not the worst event.* Funeral rites have been denied to godly men and faithful witnesses for Christ. But the burial of a man is of little moment: *that* is not the *end* of the man: Worse issues follow.

3. *Burial affects not our future destiny.* Be he interred as a brute, or amid the pomp of royalty, the destiny of a man depends upon *life*, not upon death and burial.

4. *Piety exalts, while wickedness debases* men. Jehoiakim's impiety set him below beggars. Piety raises beggars from the dunghill and sets them among princes. Piety is God's high-road to heaven: impiety is Satan's high-road to perdition.—*Ibid.*

See *Addenda:* THE SINNER'S BURIAL.

Ver. 21. *Theme:* REGARD FOR GOD DEADENED BY PROSPERITY.

The condition of life most coveted may be most harmful—"*prosperity.*" Only by denials of our wishes are we kept low at God's feet. We can recall events and experiences in which God came to our souls and arrested them in falling away from Him. Yet notwithstanding all He has done, we are very far from God.

If so far from Him despite all He has done to keep us obedient, what would have been our case had He never crossed our wishes by afflictions and discipline?

We should be *grateful that He has desolated our "prosperity"* and reclaimed us from disloyalty to Him.

Judah's case shows: *A people suffered to advance with a prosperity that became fatal to their spiritual life.*

It reflects the state of a *church* which through "prosperity" declines from spiritual fervour and zeal; of the *saint*, who through "prosperity" grows indifferent: of the *sinner*, who through "prosperity" becomes reckless of God's calls to submission and repentance. "I spake to thee in thy prosperity," &c.

I. The voice of God is addressing itself to the souls of men.

Effects prove the cause; and in the *sinner alarmed*, the *backslider arrested*, the *church awakened*, we see evidences that God has spoken and made His voice heard.

1. *In what ways* the voice of God utters its appeals. Whatever speaks of God to the soul is the agent of God. "Earthquakes, fire, or still small voice." Calamity, pestilence, death, losses; conscience, the Bible, the preacher, the Spirit. God speaks thus in various voices to the heart of man.

2. *To what extent* God is speaking to men. To all. For there is a *common* call as well as an *effectual* call (comp. ver. 29).

3. *For what purpose* God addresses men. He *warns* against sin, ruinous selfishness, absorption in the world, forgetfulness of God, death and eternity. He *appeals* to men to repent, be reconciled, "flee from wrath to come," &c.

II. Man's attention to God's voice is influenced by his circumstances.

"I spake *in thy prosperity*, and thou saidst, *I will not hear*." We take no heed in the day of youth and health and ease. But trouble is a good teacher. "In their affliction they will seek Me early."

1. *There is going on in every heart a struggle for ascendancy.* Selfishness is at war with conscience, sin with Christ. In every heart there will be a supreme: and if our pleasures or possessions absorb our affections, then the spiritual must succumb.

2. *What holds the heart supremely subjugates all else.* If any one ungodly thing sways us, then God's claims become ignored. And *the law* with us, as with the universe, is *advance*. No affection is stationary. It strengthens or weakens. Thus, when any object holds our affections before God, or in opposition to God, the heart becomes turned against God, and we repudiate His voice.

III. Prosperity in life deadens our soul's susceptibilities to Divine appeals.

1. *"Prosperity" is not in itself an evil.* The Bible honours it. There may be *commercial* prosperity, *social* prosperity, *spiritual* prosperity, *church* prosperity: and all may be good. May God give you all these "prosperities."

2. But while in itself good, and coveted as a good, *"prosperity" may prove the soul's snare.* It may be bad in its effect on us. What is full can receive no addition; and if prosperity fill our hearts, *Christ has no place there.* Thus: *commercial* prosperity has made many spiritually "wretched and poor and miserable." "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." Few can carry a full cup with a steady hand, or bear the world on their shoulders without bowing to the earth.

So even *spiritual* prosperity may beget elation, self-security. The successful Christian worker may be ready to trumpet his successes, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord!" Paul found danger "lest he should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations."

There may be less of Christ in a numerically prosperous church, than where there is "little strength:" less of Christ in the prosperous soul than in the heart desolate through darkness and non-success. And hence "I dwell with the humble and contrite."

IV. Hindrances to our regarding God's voice He will remove.

Comp. vers. 5, also 8, 9.

1. *What deadens our attention God dooms.* Be it pride, health, or energy, eagerness after success, refuges of lies, favours and privileges. He will remove them far from us, or us from them.

2. *God's voice must be heard.* There was a rich man, who was a "fool"; all

God's calls were disregarded. But God *made* His voice heard at last—in terror in scorn.

For if we refuse to hear through life, *death will come* when that awful Voice will drown all others, and in *judgment* it will silence all appeals in its sentence of doom.

See *Addenda*: PROSPERITY.

Theme: INFLUENCE OF PROSPERITY.

"I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear."

In heaven, the more abundantly God's bounties are dispensed, the more is He loved and adored; but on earth, the richer His gifts, the more will He be neglected and disobeyed. A striking proof of our depravity, that constant prosperity hardens, and is unfavourable to piety.

I. That abundant earthly blessings do tend to make the heart rebellious towards God.

1. *Scripture teachings* are emphatic on this matter. The Israelites were warned (Deut. viii. 12–14). A frequent metaphor likens men to beasts luxuriantly fed (Hos. xiii. 6). Agur's prayer was prompted by distrust of himself (Proverbs xxx. 8, 9).

2. *Experience confirms Scripture. David*, the man after God's heart, when exalted became a polluted murderer. *Solomon*, the wisest man, was transformed into a besotted sensualist. *Moses*, the meekest man, spoke contemptuously, "Hear now, ye rebels, must *we* fetch water," &c. In these instances we see that the highest human virtues and holiest saints of God were unable to withstand the influence of prosperity. They could endure affliction and profit thereby—as certain liquors ripen in the shade, which under the noonday beams turn to acidity and corruption.

Similar instances occur now. Many a religious career, which began with fervour and zeal, has been checked by worldly prosperity and ended amid the stupidity and sensuality of a worldling.

3. It is doubtful whether there ever was a single instance of piety which could *pass uninjured through the ordeal of unmingled prosperity*. Tone of religion is lowered amid riches and honours. Where simplicity and humility of spirit are *preserved amid* prosperity, it is owing to some *hidden trouble*, which like the cord on the feet of the aspiring bird keeps the proud spirit lowly and abased.

II. If then, upon the highest religious characters worldly prosperity has a hardening influence, what must be its effect on those who have no religious principle to counteract it, and who are avowedly lovers of the world and its pleasures?

1. *They will not heed the messages of God.* In the chamber of sickness and among the afflicted there may be success; but none among the children of prosperity and nurslings of vanity.

2. *Religion, with its sober realities, is despised.* Their heart is set upon the world, wealth invites to its enjoyment.

3. *Those favoured of fortune are the most pitiable objects in the world.* We may not limit God's grace, which can bring the soul from amid unmingled prosperity to bow in lowly subjection before the sceptre of Jesus. Affliction may bring down the soul, or it may become surfeited with life's good things, and then God's message will be heard; but those who are "full" and "laugh now" too often inherit only the Saviour's "woes."

III. They who have worldly prosperity should be led to self-inquiry as to its effect upon themselves.

1. In no country like our own are there so *many who have risen from small beginnings* to great estates and honours. Has God "granted your requests but sent leanness into your souls"? When riches increased, have you set your heart upon them? Are you the same simple-hearted and sincere follower of Jesus as when you began to lay the foundation of your worldly exaltation? "Remember from whence thou hast fallen."

2. What a *caution is here to those who are seeking prosperity!* Can you discover a means of preserving a lowly spiritual mind amid prosperity? Unless so, there is no alternative but that you must suffer adversity to keep you humble, or become worldly and spiritually hardened.

3. They who have become *more indisposed to hear the voice of God* should awake to their peril. Had you been placed amid afflictions and deprivations, it might have been better for your soul. "The goodness of God should lead thee to repentance;" but it has had the opposite effect, and led to greater sin. What depravity is here! Is not that a brutish nature which is more rebellious to its owner the richer the pasture he provides? Is this the spirit of a reasonable intelligent creature? *Does not such a heart need a change?*

4. *Prosperous ones may well regard their case with apprehension.* The evil days will come when they will say, "I have no pleasure in them." Spare yourselves the blow by renouncing the world for Christ. Is the sacrifice too great for Him who gave His life for you?—*W. H. Lewis, D.D., "Sermons for the Christian Year."*

Theme: PROSPERITY BANEFUL.

Scripture uniformly teaches that distance from God is the greatest misery—nearness to Him the greatest good. *Hell* is the extreme point of distance from Him: *Heaven* is the perfection of nearness and resemblance to Him. In proportion as we are under the power of religion, we are said to walk with God, conforming ourselves to His will, placing ourselves beneath His eye, and rejoicing in the proofs of His acceptance and favour. In proportion as we are destitute of religion, we are said to live without God in the world—we neither are solicitous for His glory, nor are mindful of His friendship, nor are disposed to listen to His voice. In *affliction* we do not bow in holy resignation to His will, in *prosperity* we do not own the hand from whence our mercies flow. And this is the description of Israel: "*I spake to thee in thy prosperity, but thou wouldst not hear.*"

The text is a charge brought against the Jewish nation; and it is accompanied with a threat of the removal of those mercies they had abused by a long and mournful captivity. The same charge is applicable to most men in a greater or less degree.

I. **The exactness with which God observes all that relates to human character and conduct.**

The text is the language of regret. A father weeping over a child: a benefactor—a Saviour deploring "*I spake in prosperity.*"

1. All *our relative circumstances* are immediately before His eye; and He notices with tender and faithful scrutiny the various effects which His merciful dispensations have upon the mind. In riches and poverty, in prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in joy and sorrow, in youth and age: and He traces with most minute inspection the different effects produced with a view to the development and progression of moral character. Not with angry eye merely, but with kind solicitude and regard: as a father a child.

How different a thing is life in human and Divine estimation. Man thinks *what shall I eat.* But God looks to growth of piety and principle.

2. The circumstances of human life, however produced, are undoubtedly *under the guidance of Providence,* and therefore subservient to a wise and perfect design. Each man's history is arranged and adapted with utmost precision to the growth of permanent character. When the outline is fully sketched, when the discipline has had its perfect operation, when the education is completed not to our conceptions but to the eye of Deity, we no longer continue here. The fruit being *set,* the winds scatter the blossoms; the fruit being *ripe,* the sun loses its power; the fruit falling or being gathered, winter is at hand.

God marks everything. "*This thy manner from thy youth. Thou hast* not obeyed." A faithful record is kept.

II. **The tendency of unsanctified prosperity to render us insensible to the claims of religion and separate us still farther from God.**

Prosperity and adversity relative terms.

1. Uninterrupted comfort tends to *lessen our confidence in God:* to form in the mind a feeling of self-confidence: a security nothing can shake: so much so that religion can make no entrance

into the mind. It overcomes that feeling of humility and dependence which is the source of every virtue, and consequently weakens the hold of principle, and aims directly at the foundation of all religion.

2. Another fatal effect of it is *to harden the heart.* God would have every temporal blessing raise the inquiry, "*Lord, what is man?*" But wicked and irreligious men are only concerned for enjoyment, and for scope for their ambition. They feed and grovel like swine beneath the oak, without looking up to the boughs that bore the fruit or the hand that shakes it down. Hence prosperity is but a bad nurse to virtue, a nurse which is like to starve it in its infancy and to spoil it in its growth. The corrupt affection, which seemed dead and chill under the winter of affliction, is like the serpent warmed into life and venom by the sun of prosperity.

3. Then comes *pride.* Hezekiah shows his treasures. Nebuchadnezzar exclaims, *Is not this Babylon? Pride and pomp.* Then God is forgotten: prayer neglected. If Jeshurun wax fat, ten to one he kicks against Him who made him so.

4. Leaves a dulness and lethargy of mind. All Divine threatenings, warnings, promises unheeded.

III. Various ways in which God rebukes this tendency and humbles men.

God speaks to men in various ways, and He distinctly marks the various impressions produced upon the mind by His communications. He speaks to us by His Word and ordinances, by the instructions we receive in religious education, by the various dispensations of His providence, by affliction, by mercies, all are the voice of God to man. "*I spake.*"

The externals of life undesirable. "Give me neither poverty nor riches."

Affliction—its design.

The care of the soul is "the one thing needful."

Immediately apply to Christ.

—*Samuel Thodey,* A.D. 1828.

SERMON TO THE YOUNG.

"*This has been thy manner from thy youth*" (ver. 21).

The habits formed in youth generally continue in future life. The early customs of Judah led on to the settled condition of indifference to God's calls and counsels.

I. Mankind generally continue to live according to the habits formed in youth.

There are some exceptions. Youths who were profligate have in after life become godly, &c. By the period of youth I mean from, say twelve to twenty-five: this is the season when habits are formed. And the words of the text will apply to those

1. Whose life is given to the *luxury of pleasure.*

2. Who pass the season of youth in *indulging in gross vices.* (*a.*) To the Sabbath-breaker; (*b.*) to the profane; (*c.*) to the drunkard.

3. Equally relevant to *vices of the mind.* (*a.*) Selfishness; (*b.*) pride; (*c.*) malignity.

4. So also as regards *their attitude towards religion.* (*a.*) Those who pass their youth in a merely *formal* regard to the external duties of religion usually become formalists. (*b.*) Those who practise *guile and deceit* become hypocritical. (*c.*) Those who in youth *slight the Gospel,* in old age are seen to be unfeeling and hardened. (*d.*) Those who are *sceptical* frequently become confirmed infidels.

Youth is generally the season when a decision is made either in favour of religion or against.

II. Custom in any course generally issues in confirmed habits. "This has been *thy manner* from thy youth."

1. The *commencement of a course* in life is often attended with a struggle and with difficulties. When a young person begins a *sinful* course, there is the struggle against instruction, remonstrances of conscience, &c. So also in a *religious* career.

2. But *continuance in a course* renders habits congenial and easy. So difficult then is it for those who have accustomed themselves to pursue evil ways to desist, that little hope is entertained for a change. "Shall the Ethiopian change his skin?" &c. "This has been thy manner from thy youth."

III. Solemn uses to which these truths may be applied.

You are old enough now to decide your future. You are now in the most important season of your life. Accept

1. *A few cautions.*

(1.) Guard against slighting parental instruction. (2.) Against slighting the gospel. (3.) Against slighting the Sabbath. (4.) Avoid also ungodly companions.

2. *A few exhortations*—founded upon the fact that your future life may be expected to correspond with the habits formed in youth.

(1.) Accustom yourselves to *consider your accountability to God.* "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" and think that for the sins and habits of your youth He will require an account in the day of judgment. (2.) Study the *Sacred Book by which your future should be directed.*

(3.) *Decide early in favour of religion.* This will be the best security from the evils to which you will surely be exposed. It will equip you to be useful in life. It will ensure your future happiness. It will prepare you for death. There is another world beyond the present.—*Old MS.*

Vers. 20–23. *Theme:* HASTENING DESOLATIONS.

Judah and Jerusalem, spoken to as an individual, appear in a threefold character.

i. *Very haughty in the day of peace and safety* (ver. 21). It is common for those who live at ease to live in contempt of the Word of God. This is so much the worse because it is habitual—"thy manner from thy youth."

ii. *Very timorous at the alarms of trouble* (ver. 20). When "*thy lovers*," idols and foreign alliances, fail thee, thou wilt ascend the mountains and *cry for help* (ver. 20); but *all in vain* (ver. 22).

iii. *Very tame under the heavy and lasting pressures of trouble* (ver. 22). "Ashamed and confounded," &c. Many will never be ashamed of their sins till they are brought by them to their last extremity. She was *proud* and *self-secure* in her prosperity (ver. 23), "made her nest in cedars:" but in her humiliation she will promise God to be humble and amend her ways: "how gracious wilt thou be," &c.—*Henry.*

Ver. 24. *Theme:* THE PUNISHMENT OF THE IMPENITENT.

Such punishment is both—(*a*) inevitable: (*b*) justifiable

I. **Awful instances in which God has verified this declaration.**

1. The apostate angels. 2. Our first parents. 3. Destruction of mankind by the Flood. 4. The children of Israel. 5. Moses, David, the disobedient prophet. 6. The death of Christ as man's substitute.

II. **Reasons which support this declaration.**

1. Not a disposition to give pain: nor a desire for revenge. 2. It is the nature and tendency of sin to produce misery.—*Payson.*

Theme: WOE TO CONIAH.

Here, in this malediction, the prophet describes Jehoiachin under three similes:—

I. **A signet plucked from God's hand.** A signet was like the "great seal" of England, *the badge of office.* It meant the loss of kingship and royal authority.

1. *Plucked off by God Himself* (ver. 24). So that God by special action renounces this godless king.

2. *Handed over to the Chaldean tyrant* (ver. 25). Thus God puts him, entirely separated from Himself, into the power of Nebuchadnezzar; "without God in the world"—given over to the foe!

Zerubbabel, God's servant, the nephew of Jeconiah, was made by God "as a signet" (comp. Hag. ii. 23; see also Gen. xli. 42; 1 Kings xxi. 8; Esther iii. 10, viii. 2; Dan. vi. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Rev. vii. 3, ix. 4).

Jeconiah was a signet, but plucked and cast away. After only three months' reign, he was carried captive to Babylon.

Thus God can "put down the mighty from their seats, and exalt them of low degree" (Luke i. 51–53).

II. A cherished idol despised (ver. 28). Coniah was once *idolised by the Jews;* and great things had been expected of him. Indeed it was hoped he would frustrate the Chaldean power, avert or bring back Judah from the Chaldean captivity, and thus falsify Jeremiah's sad prediction.

He had also been *exalted by Jehovah* as king of God's favoured and covenant people.

Henry states these facts thus:

1. *Time was when he was dignified, almost deified.* But now that he is deposed, he is despised. "What is unjustly honoured will be justly contemned; and rivals with God will be the scorn of men."

2. *Time was when he was delighted in.* But now he is "a vessel in which is no pleasure," because either out of fashion or unserviceable. Those whom God has no pleasure in will some time or other be so mortified that men will have no pleasure in them (see Psa. xxi. 13; Hos. viii. 8).

III. A king deprived of posterity (ver. 30). Jeconiah was not *literally* childless (comp. ver. 28: "his seed," 1 Chron. iii. 17, 18; Matt. i. 12); but was to be "written" *lineally* childless. Messiah was only lineally descended from Jeconiah *through* Joseph, who though His legal was not His real father. The succession to the throne failed in his line: nevertheless, the promise to David (Psa. lxxxix. 30–37) was revived in Zerubbabel, and consummated in Christ.

The king who succeeded Jeconiah was his uncle Zedekiah, and with him *the Hebrew monarchy* as a visible institution *was destroyed.*

See *Addenda:* WRITTEN CHILDLESS.

Eusebius, the historian (*Eccles. Hist.* iii. 20), says, "Jeconiah was the last king of David's line. His uncle indeed actually reigned after him, but perished with his sons long before Jeremiah's death (chap. lii. 10). In the legal genealogies Salathiel (Heb. Shealtiel), who was descended from David through his son Nathan, is counted as his son, but neither he nor Zerubbabel prospered so as to sit on David's throne. And gradually their descendants became so insignificant as to be but 'a cut-down tree' (Isa. xi. 1), and 'a dry ground' (Isa. liii. 2). When *from this uncrowned lineage* Christ had come, and the growing strength of Christianity had aroused the jealous fears of Domitian, he caused a *search to be made for the descendants of David;* but when they were brought before him, they proved to be such simple country people that he despised them and let them go."

1. From so proud an ancestor no descendant of note ever rose upon the notice of history.

2. Yet from a family so utterly fallen, came the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Ver. 29. *Theme:* MISSIONARY SERMON. GOD'S CALL TO THE WORLD.

Judah would *not heed* or *believe* God's message (ver. 19); so God appeals to the world to record His denunciations and watch their fulfilment. The treble repetition of "earth" *emphasises* the appeal: it is therefore *urgent* that earth should hear God's Word. The repetition is also an *intensitive* form, and expresses God's *earnestness* in making this call to "earth."

I. The whole wide earth engages God's solicitude.

1. *As His creative product.* He formed the world; and peopled it.

2. *As His undivided possession.* Satan may deem himself "god of this world," but it is only a temporary and delusive occupancy. "The *earth is the Lord's* and the fulness thereof; the world, and *they that dwell therein.*" "All souls are Mine."

3. *As the sphere of His benignant rule.* He works not locally, in limited territories, bounded by narrow geographical lines: but over the wide world His Providence works. As wide as the light of His sun floods, &c., so is His rule. "He doeth according to His will among *the inhabitants of the world.*" "The nations are but as a drop in the bucket," &c. None overlooked. There is not an isolated spot on earth where God has not worked, adorning it with life and beauty.

4. *The whole round world is man's*

sphere of being. And "His delights are with the sons of men." This is regardless of national divisions. "God hath made of one blood all the nations for to dwell upon the earth."

5. *God is intent on making the entire globe the theatre of His most glorious reign.* "The uttermost parts of the earth" are to share in His glory. "All men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations call Him blessed."

II. To the whole wide earth God addresses His messages.

1. *Under Old Testament dispensations there were world-wide communications* which overleaped the restrictions of Judaism. The Jews would have kept Jehovah to themselves, and all His revelations. But many grand truths were gathered into the Mosaic code, the Jewish Scriptures, which were for all people. The Sabbath was not for the Jews alone, but a law for all nations and all time. *God's character* declared on Sinai was a revelation for every one. His words of mercy to sinners, "Come, let us reason together," "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c., were without any Jewish limitation. "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him" (Acts x. 34, 35).

2. *Prior to the Gospel, God gathered the whole world into His love.* The Gospel but expressed that love. "He *so* loved that He gave His Son." Glad fact that the love of God is older than the Incarnation. It is everlasting love—universal love.

3. *Jesus Christ proclaimed the universal religion.* God's message to *sinners.* "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

4. *In God's revelations there is adaptation to and provision for the whole earth. Warnings: counsels: invitations: pleadings: promises.*

"Enough for each, enough for all."

III. Over the whole wide earth His Word is to be proclaimed.

1. *By human lips.* Jeremiah is the speaker. Men who know the "Word of the Lord" must tell it.

2. *With impassioned earnestness.* Pleading and appealing. "O earth, earth, earth!" Enthusiasm should impel us.

3. *With restless urgency.* "Not holding our peace day or night, we that make mention of the Lord."

4. *With dauntless persistency.* Men will not heed the first cry—then *cry again;* "O earth, *earth*, EARTH!"

5. *With universal fulness.* Tell a Gospel which is "unto all people," to "all people;" till "every soul shall know the joyful sound:" till "Christ is Lord indeed."

See also *Noticeable Topics:* "GOD'S VOICE TO MAN."

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER XXII.

Topic: WAR THEME: GRIEF FOR THOSE WHO HAVE GONE AWAY TO WAR. (Ver. 10.)

For those who, as soldiers or seamen, have left their native country, there is more occasion to mourn than for "the quiet dead."

Notice some of the TEMPTATIONS, TRIALS, and DANGERS to which they are exposed.

I. Temptations to vice, which meet those who leave virtuous homes and enter the camp or the ship of war. They may have been the children of many prayers, &c. But away from home restraints—the scoffer's jest, licentious inducements, the gambling table, allure them from Bible-reading, Sabbath reverence, &c., and they go down to graves of infamy and woe. Of how many such is it true, that

"Doubly dying, they go down
To the vile dust from whence they sprang,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

II. Exposure to sickness and death, when far removed from home and those

who love them. It may be "easy to die in battle" where the spirit is stirred to a courageous madness, and

> "Fame is there to tell who bleeds,
> And Honour's eye's on daring deeds."

But to waste away by sickness through exposure to drenching rains and deadly climate, to be crushed or mangled by a blow, and left to rude attentions until death ends all!

III. Ponder the horrors of captivity to which battles expose soldiers and sailors. The crowded prison-cell, scanty food and drink, fiend-like foes, and sufferings and cruelties inflicted on the conquered: from such horrors we turn away in bitter indignation and anguish; feeling and saying—

> "O judgment! thou hast fled to brutish beasts,
> And men have lost their reason!"

IV. The horrors of the battle-field. Truly, "every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood." The maimed and mangled left to bleed and die! Or turn to naval battles, where are bursting shells, shattered masts, gory decks, shrieks of anguish, and heaps of slain!

V. Brutalising effect of war on soldiers. What secret theft, open and violent robbery, the outrages on virtue and humanity, now abandoned to the heat of passion, to unbridled lust, &c.

Such is war: cruel and relentless, with hands of violence and eyes of flaming rage, with gory locks and crimson banners, &c. The rejoicing of nations for victories won is mingled with the wail of the widow, the cry of the orphan, the anguish of parents bereaved.

All this should constrain us to

1. *Do all we can for the spiritual good of our army and navy.* Succour them with all bodily comforts amid the miseries of battle, but write them personal letters when we can, and also send them messengers and ministers of sacred truth.

2. *Pray for them* that *God may restrain them from temptations* and lead them as good soldiers of the Cross to *triumph over their spiritual foes.* Thus, should they die, we may hope they would gain the victor's crown of life on high.

The more we do for the spiritual good of our national defenders the sooner may we hope for enduring national peace, and for the coming years of universal peace: when

> "No more shall nation against nation rise,
> Nor ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,
> Nor fields with gleaming steel be covered o'er,
> The brazen trumpets kindle rage no more;
> But useless lances into scythes shall bend,
> And the broad falchion in the ploughshare end."
>
> —*Rev. Charles Rockwell*, New York, 1864.

Topic: GOD'S VOICE TO MAN. "*O earth, hear the word of the Lord*" (ver. 29).

The Bible is the Word of God, and every man is interested in its contents. It is God's own message to His own world—a message transparent with light and warm with love. It brings, as we believe, its own evidence of its truth, the credentials of its Divine original in every page—for the best argument in favour of the Bible is the Book itself—in the grandeur of its doctrines, in the purity of its precepts, in the richness of its promises; in the faithfulness of its warnings, and above all in its complete adaptation to the state and condition of guilty man; revealing as it does an atoning sacrifice and a sanctifying Spirit, a sacrifice worthy of God to accept, and equal to the salvation of a fallen world. The evidences of this religion, sustained as they have been by MIRACLE and by PROPHECY, have been

sufficient to satisfy the keenest inquiry of the wisest and best of men, and to guide countless myriads in their path to heaven, who, living, have owned its power, and dying, have rejoiced in its grace. We may go round to all the varieties of this world's population and say, *O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord*, assured of finding a ready echo and response in every honest and penitent mind. The great doctrine this text contains is *the importance of listening to the Bible as the voice of God.* Hear the Word.

I. Specify some respects in which we should hear God's voice.

1. *In the still small voice of heavenly mercy.*

This threefold adjuration supposes great indifference, great reluctance on man's part to listen to God's voice of mercy. We might well ask, Are the inhabitants of the world dead or deaf that God calls the cold and barren earth to listen to His Word when man would not?

The Gospel itself, though it proclaims peace on earth and goodwill to man, is coldly regarded. How striking that announcement of the angels, "*unto you is born a Saviour;*" *to you* MEN, *not to* US ANGELS. There was no olive branch in their deluge: no brazen serpent in their rebellious camp: no city of refuge in all their courts: no star of Bethlehem in their sky: no "mighty to save" travailed in the greatness of His strength on their behalf. When angels sinned, justice took its own unfettered course; but when Adam fell, a Saviour was provided.

> "From heaven the sinning angels fell,
> And wrath and vengeance chained them down;
> But man, vile man, forsook his bliss,
> And mercy lifts him to a crown."

It is under this last best dispensation of heavenly truth and grace that we are living. O listen to the still small voice of eternal mercy.

2. *In the loud thunder of God's providential dispensation.*

God calls attention to the overthrow of Judea and its monarchy. It is, therefore, to the crash of falling thrones and of extinguished dynasties that God appeals, to teach His people that sin is a great destroyer; for wherever guilt reigns, the pale angel of retribution is sure to follow. The Bible is the interpreter of Providence, and Providence is the best interpreter of the Bible. The Jews have a saying, "*That God spake as truly to Israel by His ten plagues in Egypt, as He did by His ten words on Sinai.*" We are exhorted *to hear the Rod and Him that appointed it;* and we are sure that, sooner or later, they who will not hear His voice in His WORD, must be made to feel the weight of His ROD.

3. *In your personal and relative afflictions, God speaks and demands a hearing.*

The various methods in which God meets with man and causes solemn warnings to affect the heart, form a striking part of His procedure; and every such appeal rejected will constitute a fearful item in our last account. God has been no niggard in His communications, and has studied economy in nothing so little as in the impressions and convictions He conveys to the guilty conscience. Men are met, day by day, in their business, in their families, in their public walks, in their private retirements, in the exchange of merchandise, in the temple of religion, with warning voices and monitions, of which God is the immediate author. In every family affliction, in every sudden death, in every instance of wounded affection, or disappointed ambition, or ruined hope, and in the overwhelming dismay created by the prospect of poverty on the one hand, or by the removal from our side of those upon whose right arm we leaned, God comes very near to us, and seems to say in accents we cannot misunderstand, "*Now I will be seen; now I will make Myself heard.*" God speaks to us from the grave of a friend; from the cradle of a child; from the death of an enemy; and from the great changes and losses always going on in the troubled theatre of human affairs, "*The Lord's voice crieth unto the city,*" in every variety of accent, "*O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord.*"

It has often been remarked that in the time of the great plague in Florence, in Venice, and in London, those who escaped became more dissipated and abandoned to evil than ever, acting upon the libertine sentiment, "*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.*" Affliction where it does not soften, only hardens the more.

4. *In the ample promises and encouragements addressed to returning penitents.*

To humble the sinner and to exalt the Saviour is the leading design of the whole Record, but it is *the death of the sin* and *not the death of the soul* that God contemplates. Truly the case of the long-hardened sinner is mournful and hazardous, but it is not either remediless or desperate, seeing that there is a great sacrifice provided for sin, and an all-sufficient Saviour revealed in the Gospel.

Yet think *not that repentance and faith*, important as they are in the order of means, can be in any sense the meritorious conditions of salvation. This were to put those things in Christ's stead, which are only the stepping-stones in our way to Him. It is not the virtue of our believing, but the merit of Him in whom we believe that avails for acceptance and pardon.

Nor is it *to the strength of our faith* merely that the promise is made, but to the reality of it. The weak hand of a child may hold that precious pearl which worlds want wealth to buy; and faith which is as a grain of mustard-seed has power to remove mountains.

Come, upon the strength of His own invitation: or let urgent and desperate necessity be your warrant, for you must perish if you stay away. Let the acceptance which others have found induce you to come; for their experience is your encouragement. Let the wonders of His redemptive work urge your footsteps towards His throne. *Return to Me, for I have redeemed thee.* Every leaf of His Book has a voice to say RETURN. All the threatenings and all the promises say RETURN; all His judgments and all His mercies say RETURN. The whole intelligent universe would seem to have but one voice. Voices from heaven and voices from hell say RETURN. If the redemption of the soul be precious, RETURN. If the terrors of hell be awful, if the joys of heaven be attractive, RETURN. "*O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord.*"

II. Enumerate some reasons why the whole earth is interested in these communications.

i. *Because the Gospel shows the only plan of salvation.*

ii. *Because the progressive improvement and advancement of the race is connected with this message.*

Christian nations have been distinguished by intelligence. The spirit of science rests solely with them: in dark ages it burnt in secret. Since the Reformation the progression of knowledge has been constant. In the East the mind has lost somewhat of its capacity and power. In the West, under the auspices of Christianity, men appear to have attained a vigour in intellectual exertions. An impregnable barrier is fixed against the return of general ignorance and barbarism.

iii. *Because the success of missionary work shows the practicability of diffusing it.*

iv. *Because the signs of the times are in direct accord with the promises of God.*

—*Samuel Thodey.*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XXII. ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 10. WEEP NOT FOR THE DEAD. "*Weep not for the dead*," *i.e.*, of Jehoiakim, who died on the road when taken captive.

"*Weep for him that goeth away*," *i.e.*, Jehoiachin, who was a prisoner thirty-seven years, and ultimately died in captivity.

The prophet says they should not weep for Jehoiakim, for he died at once, a death common to mortals, but should weep for Jehoiachin, because he lingered in wretchedness and dishonour, and never returned to his beloved country.

So enlarging on the evils of the Captivity, he would not have them weep for the warriors of the house of David who had died in honourable conflicts, and who

had slept in sepulchres of their ancestors, but for those who had been taken captive, and died away from home.

The ancients in the *Gemara* say, "Weep not for the dead"—that is *immoderately:* three days are allowed for weeping; on the seventh the obsequies are performed; after which they dress not showily, but shave and anoint. "But weep for him that goeth"—that is, *childless.* Our sages apply this moral, that in our feelings we should combine nature with Scripture; meaning, feel as mortals, but with moderation as Israelites, to whom it was forbidden to indulge in the excesses of the heathen, and who might hope to meet at the resurrection of the dead.

The ancients apply it to Abram and Esau (Gen. xxv. 34). Esau coming in, saw Jacob cooking lentiles — asking why? "For their grandfather, Abram," said Jacob, "it being food for mourners." Esau said, "Is it possible that upright man was included in the pain of death? Then there is no reward nor resurrection," and he resolved to sell his birthright as useless benefit. Weep not for dead, *i.e.*, Abram; *but for him that goeth, i.e.*, Esau, who went and despised his primogeniture. *Conciliator:* By R. M. BEN ISRAEL (*E. H. Linto.*)

Vide *Kitto's Daily Readings:* "ISAIAH AND THE PROPHETS," on this verse.

Ver. 13. COVETOUSNESS. "Some men are so covetous, as if they were to live for ever; and others so profuse, as if they were to die the next moment."—*Aristotle.*

"The covetous man lives as if the world were made altogether for him, and not he for the world, to take in everything and part with nothing."—*South.*

"The covetous man pines in plenty, like Tantalus up to the chin in water and yet thirsty."—*Adams.*

BUILDETH BY UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. Such injurious and therefore accursed builders were the pyramid-makers in Egypt. Tarquinius Priscus, Caligula, Nero, Phocas, who is said to have heard this voice of heaven—"Though thou shouldst erect thine edifice as high as heaven, yet sin that lieth at the foundation will soon overturn all." Bernard inveigheth against some in his time who did with great care and cost (*erigere muros, negligere moros*) build high *manors*, but not amend their *manners.*—*Trapp.*

Ver. 19. "BURIAL OF AN ASS." He who had such a stately house in Jerusalem should not have a grave to house his carcase in. Our Richard III., for his exactions to maintain a great court and favourites, lost his kingdom, was starved to death at Pomfret Castle, and scarce afforded common burial. King Stephen was interred in Faversham monastery, but since, his body, for the gain of the lead wherein it was coffined, was cast into the river. Let great ones so live as that they meet not in the end with the death of a dog, the burial of an ass, and the epitaph of an ox, such as Aristotle calleth that of Sardanapalus—"ταῦτ' ἔχω ἔφαγον καὶ ἐφύβρισα," &c.—*Trapp.*

THE SINNER'S BURIAL.

"Wrapt in a Christless shroud,
He sleeps a Christless sleep;
Above him the eternal cloud,
Beneath, the fiery deep.

Laid in a Christless tomb,
There bound with felon-chain,
He waits the terrors of his doom,
The judgment and the pain.

O Christless shroud, how cold!
How dark, O Christless tomb!
O grief that never can grow old!
O endless, hopeless doom.

O Christless sleep, how sad!
What waking shalt thou know?
For thee no star, no dawning glad,
Only the lasting woe!

To rocks and hills in vain
Shall be the sinner's call;
O day of wrath, and death, and pain,
The lost soul's funeral!

O Christless soul, awake,
Ere thy last sleep begin!
O Christ, the sleeper's slumbers break;
Burst Thou the bands of sin."

—*Bonar.*

Ver. 21. PROSPERITY. "It is the bright day that brings out the adder." "Too much sail is dangerous."—*Common Proverbs.*

"No sooner does the warm aspect of

good fortune shine, than all the plans of virtue, raised like a beautiful frostwork in the winter of adversity, thaw and disappear."—*Warburton.*

"Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament." [How many eminent saints from being poor grew rich, as Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David, Daniel.] "Adversity is the blessing of the New Testament." [As we see in Peter, James, John, Paul," &c.].—*Lord Bacon.*

"What shall I come to, father," said a young man, "if I go on prospering in this way?" "To the *grave*," replied the father.

"Men are usually best when worst, and worst when best; like the snake which being frozen lieth quiet and still, but waxing warm, stirreth and stingeth. It is as hard to bear prosperity as to drink much wine and not be giddy. In rest we contract rust."—*Trapp.*

"Who feels no ills
Should therefore fear them; and, when fortune smiles,
Be doubly cautious, lest destruction come
Remorseless on him, and he fall unpitied."
—*Sophocles.*

"More ships in calms on a deceitful coast,
Or unseen rocks, than in high storms, are lost."
—*Denham.*

"Behold, Sir Balham, now a man of spirit,
Ascribes his gettings to his parts and merit;
What late he called a blessing, now was wit,
And God's good Providence a lucky hit.
Things change their titles as their manners turn:
His counting house employed the Sabbath morn:
Seldom at church ('twas such a busy life),
But duly sent his family and wife."—*Pope.*

Ver. 30. WRITTEN CHILDLESS. "As to *succession* in the royal dignity as well as to *success* in his reign. This God would have to be written—put upon public record for the use of posterity. Our chronicles tell us of John Dudley, that great Duke of Northumberland in King Edward VI.'s days, who endeavoured by all means to engrand his posterity, reaching at the crown also, which cost him his head; that though he had six sons, all men, all married, yet none of them left any issue behind them. 'Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; serve the Lord with fear.'"—*Trapp.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter.—The chapter is an epilogue to the denunciations of the three kings in chap. xxii. It must have been written and proclaimed about the beginning of Zedekiah's reign, for a warning to him, from the examples of his predecessors, of the consequences of unrighteousness. *Cf.* notes on chap. xxi. 11–14.

2. Contemporary Scriptures.—2 Kings xxiv. 17–19; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10–12. Comp. Jer. lii. 1–3.

For 3. National Affairs, and 4. Contemporaneous History. See notes on chap xxi. 11–14.

5. Geographical References.—Ver. 13. "*Samaria:*" here alluded to as the territory of the ten tribes of Israel, in contrast with "*Jerusalem*" (ver. 14), the territory of Ephraim and Judah. Ver. 14. "*Sodom and Gomorrah:*" two cities "of the plain," standing close together, in or near the vale of Siddim (Gen. x. 19, xiii. 10); overthrown B.C. 2064, for their atrocious wickedness (Gen. xviii. 20; Rom. ix. 29). Their doom is held up as a warning to the children of Israel (Deut. xxix. 23), and forms a standing illustration of abandoned iniquity (Deut. xxxii. 32; Isa. i. 9, 10;) and in this verse. Josephus states that the Dead Sea now fills the valley in which these "cities of the plain" stood (Ant. i. 9), but elsewhere affirms (War, iv. 8, 4) that the site of Sodom was not submerged, but remains a burnt and charred scene. Pilgrims to Palestine formerly saw, or thought they saw, ruins of towns at the bottom of the Dead Sea, not far from the shore.

6 Personal Allusions.—Ver. 5. "*David.*" Comp. Homily on ver. 24 of chap. xxii. for the lineal royal connection with David.

7. Natural History.—Ver. 5. "*Branch.*" This word *Tsemach* occurs also in chap. xxxiii. 15; Zech. iii. 8, vi. 12, and denotes a springing or budding plant—"*a sprout.*" Dr. Payne Smith remarks: "A tree has many branches, and these can be pruned away without killing the tree, but the sprout is that in which the root springs up and grows, and which, if it be destroyed, makes the root perish also. For its use, see Gen. xix. 25; Isa. lxi. 11, in both which places it springs directly out of the ground; also Ezek. xvi. 7, xvii. 9; Hos. viii. 7, where it is translated either *bud* or *spring.*"

Ver. 15. "*Wormwood and gall:*" *cf.* notes on chaps. ix. 15, and viii. 14.

Ver. 28. "*Chaff and wheat:*" *cf.* Homily on verse *infra.*

8. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 25. "*I have dreamed, I have dreamed:*" Professional "dreamers" early appeared (see Deut. xiii. 1), for superstitious people in all ages have given ready credulity to these false visionists.

9. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 5. "*A King shall reign and prosper.*" Rather, "He shall reign as king and prosper;" as contrasted with chap. xxiii. 30.

Ver. 6. "*His name whereby He shall be called,* THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." "He shall be called" is more properly "*he shall call him:*" *i.e.*, either "*God* shall," &c., or "he shall"—*each* shall. Several MSS., however, read, וְיִקְרְאוּ plural, "*they* shall call him," instead of וְיִקְרָא singular. "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS:" *Jehovah Tsidkenu.* Criticism has attempted to make "Jehovah" the nominative of "shall call,"—"Jehovah shall call him, "*our Righteousness:*" thus destroying the compound name, and depriving the Messiah of the title of Deity: but *Henderson* affirms, and in this is sustained by the consensus and weight of modern scholarship, that "to make יְהוָה the nominative of the verb (*shall call*) is to contradict all Hebrew usage, according to which the name given, and not the person who gives the name, immediately follows the verb.

Ver. 15. "*Profaneness gone forth*"—profanation, desecration.

Ver. 17. "*Imagination*"—stubbornness.

Ver. 19. "*Behold, a whirlwind,*" &c. The verse should read, *Behold, a tempest* (storm wind) *of Jehovah! Fury is gone forth* (or, even *hot anger* is gone forth); and *a whirlwind* (סַעַר מִתְחוֹלֵל, a tornado, whirling storm) *shall be hurled* (or burst) *upon the head of the wicked.*

Ver. 29. "*Is not My word like as a fire?*" The presence of the word כֹּה, *thus*, in this sentence gives rise to the suggestion that formerly it was כֹּחַ, *strength* or *power.* The *Targum* reads: "Are not all My words *strong* like fire?" Probably this suggested the word in Heb. iv. 12, "quick and *powerful.*"

Ver. 31. "*That use their tongues and say, He saith.*" Not נְאֻם יְהוָה, *saith Jehovah*, but only נְאֻם, "*saith.*"

Ver. 33. "*What burden?*" The LXX. divide the words אֵת־מַה־מַּשָּׂא, *What burden?* into only two sections, thus, אַתֶּם הַמַּשָּׂא, *Ye are the burden;* and with this reading, which is more rational, the following words accord: "Ye are the burden, and I will *cast you away*, saith the Lord." "*Forsaken you,*" should be, *refused you, thrown you off.*

HOMILIES ON SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XXIII.

Sections 1–8. *Judah's restoration under Jehovah Tsidkenu.*
„ 9–40. *False prophets and national levity denounced.*

Section, verses 1–8. JUDAH'S RESTORATION UNDER JEHOVAH TSIDKENU.

Through the dark clouds gathering over Jerusalem there broke occasionally gleams of sunshine. The judgments which the prophet foretold were so terrible, and the ruin awaiting Judah so overwhelming, that Jeremiah and the small remnant of the true Israel remaining might have abandoned all hope.

But God relieved their despondency by the promise that, notwithstanding the judgments and calamities, He would again visit and redeem His people.

I. The prediction assumes that all the calamities which the prophet foretold would overtake Judah. These calamities threatened the *kingdom*, and also the very *house of David:* for the expression, "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch," conveys the idea of a tender sprout springing from the root of a tree cut down or seemingly dead.

II. Yet the prediction assured them that the promise would certainly be fulfilled. The positive fulfilment of the threatening would encourage the hope in the sure realisation of the promise, and give them encouragement amid the calamities.

III. There is here an obvious contrast between this promised King and all who ever held David's throne. He was to *be righteous*, to *reign*, to *act wisely.* How different from all kings before Him! Their impiety and folly had entailed ruin upon the people.

IV. The description of their future King could not fail to astonish them. It began by comparing Him to a bud, or tender shoot, from a tree cut down, and

ended by ascribing to Him the great and fearful name of JEHOVAH! It must have awakened their *admiration, reverence, confidence:* for—

1. His being the offspring of David assured them of His *tenderest sympathy* in the well-being of Israel and Judah; and—

2. His being Jehovah gave still stronger assurance that *nothing was too difficult to accomplish*, and nothing would be left undone. And—

3. They were assured that His righteousness, power, and wisdom would be made available for *securing the peace and prosperity of His people*, as He was to be *their* Righteousness.

V. This promise has been fulfilled, and its hidden meaning unfolded. To God's ancient people obscurity must have hidden the true character of their king. The prophets themselves diligently sought a "private interpretation" of their own predictions. The Church at large was in mystery. But *to us* the mystery is all revealed.

VI. The great principle on which the whole scheme of redemption rests is here stated. "*Righteousness.*"

1. It is only on the ground of perfect righteousness that God can accept and approve an intelligent creature.

2. Yet a sinner's restoration to righteousness was impracticable by and of himself. He fell under the power as well as condemnation of sin.

3. The two conditions of man's deliverance were, *punishment* due to sin already committed must be borne, and *perfect compliance* with the demand of the law must be rendered. Man was wholly incompetent.

4. The manifold wisdom of God is seen in His provision of what seemed impossible—*perfect righteousness.* "He shall be called Jehovah *our* righteousness." —*Robert Gordon, D.D., F.R.S.C.* — "*Christ as made known to the Ancient Church.*"

Here is—

I. A word of terror to the negligent shepherds (vers. 1, 2). The day is at hand when God would reckon with them concerning the trust committed to them.

1. *They were not owners of the sheep.* God calls them "the sheep of *My* pasture."

2. *They had neglected the sheep.* "Scattered the flock," &c.

3. *They would be visited with vengeance.* They would *not* "visit" the sheep; God *would* "visit" upon them the evil of their doings. See *Addenda:* NEGLIGENT PASTORS.

II. A word of comfort to the neglected sheep.

1. *The dispersed people should be gathered happily into their own land*, and under good government (vers. 3, 4).

2. *Messiah, the good Shepherd of the sheep, would be raised up* to bless and be the glory of His people Israel (vers. 5, 6).

3. *This great salvation should far outshine Israel's deliverance from Egypt* (vers. 7, 8).

III. An illustrious description of the promised Messiah.

1. Christ is here spoken of as *the Branch from David.* Mean in appearance; His beginnings small; His rise seemingly out of the earth, but growing to be green, to be great, and to be loaded with fruits.

2. He is here spoken of as *the Church's King.* He shall *reign* on the throne of His father David, and he shall *prosper*, and not, as the degenerate kings had done, go back in their affairs. He shall set up a kingdom in the world, which shall be victorious over all opposition. And in those days of Christ's government, "Judah shall be saved," &c. When He reigns uppermost in the soul, the soul dwells at ease.

3. He is here spoken of as *The Lord our Righteousness.* (1.) *Who and what He*

is. As *God*, "Jehovah;" denoting His eternity and self-existence. As *Mediator*, "our Righteousness." All our righteousness has its being from Him; and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. (2.) *The profession and declaration of this.* "This is the name by which," &c. Not only shall He be so, but He shall be known to be so. God shall call Him by this name: and Israel shall so call Him: and every true believer shall know and call upon Him by that name.—*Matthew Henry.*

Section, verses 9–40.—False Prophets, and the National Levity denounced.

Jeremiah's deep distress under the necessity of declaring the dreadful woes which God bade him utter (ver. 9).

I. Delusive prophesyings.

1. *Criminal teachers* (vers. 13, 14). Their wicked teachings had led to *apostasy* in Samaria, and *effrontery* in Jerusalem.

2. *Deluded hearers* (vers. 16, 17). They "*hearkened*" readily; were rendered "*vain*;" grew to "*despise*" God; and still expected "*peace.*"

3. *A demoralised nation* (vers. 10, 11). Abandoned to *vileness of conduct; profanity of speech; perversity of life* ("course evil"); and resolute *defiance* ("their force is not right").

4. *God's revulsion at such scenes* (vers. 13, 14). The conduct of the Baal-priests in Samaria stirred God's *contempt;* but the vile corruptions of the Jerusalem priests aroused His *loathing and wrath.*

5. *God's remonstrance with the nation* (ver. 16). Though men mislead, God interposes with earnest appeals and honest counsels.

6. *God's charge against the prophets* (vers. 18, 21, 22). They had *neglected* "*the counsel of the Lord*"; had *spoken without a commission;* and therefore *misled God's people.*

7. *Sin's cruel seductions* (ver. 12). God gives them over to strong delusions; to inherit the miseries of their perversity.

8. *Fierce anger against transgressors* (vers. 19, 20). *Mighty* forces of destruction; working furious disaster upon the wrong-doers; allowing of no escape.

9. *Bitter woes against the prophets* (ver. 15). *Inward* bitterness: *enforced* bitterness: God would fill them with the pangs of woe.

Note:

i. *False teachers will taste the full "bitterness" of their wicked delusions.*

ii. *Wilful sinners shall be "driven on" in the slippery ways they prefer.*

iii. *No teachings which lead men to sin can have the sanction of God.*

II. Frivolous dreamers.

1. *False pretenders* to Divine communications (vers. 25–27). These dreamy surmisings are (1.) *Traced to their origin* ("the deceit of their own heart"); and (2.) *Their baneful purpose is exposed* ("they think to cause My people to forget My name," &c.).

2. *A bold distinction between God's messages and such deceits* (vers. 28, 29). The "dream" *beguiles to delusions;* the "word" *burns* all conceits and *breaks* all false confidences.

3. *An all-observing Eye* (vers. 23, 24). Deceivers are watched. Men cannot see through their fallacies, but God can. None deceive *Him.*

4. *Stern denunciations of lying prophets,* (1.) Their *sinful* practices; they "steal God's words" from true prophets and pervert or misapply them; they simulate a Divine authority for their false words, saying "He saith;" and they lead God's people "to err by their lightness." (2.) *God's severe remonstrance;* "I am against the prophets," and the "dreamers;" He would requite them for their deceptions and for the consequent errors of the people.

Note:

i. *Promises of peace from men who lead us astray from God are mere "chaff" which the wind shall drive away.*

ii. *The "faithfulness" of God's Word distinguishes it from the delusions of human teachings.*

III. Profane jesting. This charge is thrown upon the whole nation (vers. 33, 34). They so treated the messages of God's true prophet.

1. *Retorting with banter and levity.* Taking up Jeremiah's solemn words with derision, and tossing them about as if it all were a jest.

2. *Trifling with messages from God* (vers. 35, 36). Chaffing one another with being bearers of God's "burden;" and "perverting" Jehovah's "words."

3. *Rejected by Jehovah with contempt* (vers. 39, 40). God had forbidden this levity (ver. 38); and now would "cast off" the nation as a grievous and loathsome burden (ver. 39), and leave them to the "lasting shame" they so richly deserved (ver. 40).

Note:

i. *Jesting with God's Word indicates the most daring impiety.*

ii. *Such lightness and profanity* will prove a *woful burden* to the sinner and his *everlasting reproach.*

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XXIII.

Vers. 1–4. *Theme:* FAITHLESS PASTORS: FAITHFUL SHEPHERDS.

I. Woful neglect of the flock of God.

1. *On whom* God charges this faithlessness. These "pastors" were the *secular rulers*, the unrighteous kings, mentioned in chap. xxii., Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jeconiah. Note, *the responsibility of civil rulers* to God; for "By Me kings reign," &c. Hence argue: *the obligations of all in power*, whether that power be *royal, civil, ecclesiastical*, or *pastoral*, to rule and work for the highest good and the spiritual advantage of the people.

2. *For what* God threatens these shepherds. The flock was "destroyed;" *i.e.*, it was no longer "the flock of God," for the nation was a wilful and wicked herd of goats; its pastoral simplicity had been ruined. And the flock was "*scattered;*" driven away from *fidelity to God;* equally from *His nutritious pasturage;* and literally from *the fold they should have occupied*, the land they should have continued to inhabit (ver. 3). Negligent Shepherds harm the people *temporally* and *spiritually;* despoil them of the choicest blessings of this life—their spiritual comforts and heavenly hopes.

3. *With what judgments* God would visit such faithlessness. "Woe be to the pastors." "I will visit upon you the evil of your doings." With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again. The ruin of the flock would be requited by the ruin of the shepherds. (See Ezekiel xxxiii.)

II. Benignant promise of faithful pastors.

Note that the words "pastors" and "shepherds" are different translations of the same Hebrew word (*rôim*).

1. *To that nation* this was fulfilled in the raising up of *religious and righteous* rulers, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Maccabees, who were not hereditary kings of the seed of David, but men raised up by God to govern His flock.

2. *To the spiritual Israel* this was fulfilled in the *orders and ordinances of the Christian Church.* No more have we the tyranny of secular kings within the Church; but Christ Himself is King. No longer have we the impiety of priests and Pharisees within the Church (as in the Jewish Synagogue); for the apostles of Christ began a line of earnest teachers and preachers who minister within the sanctuary: faithful pastors who love and tend "the flock of God over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers."

3. *To every soul within the Saviour's fold* these assurances are now veri-

fied: "they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord" (ver. 4): for *believers* in Christ have Him for Shepherd (Ps. xxiv); and He both guards His fold from harm, and nourishes the souls of His flock.

"*Fear no more:*" it pledges a sense of *security*. Such is the luxury of Christian restfulness within the fold of and under the rule of Jesus our Lord. Safe in Christ.

"*Nor be dismayed:*" it guarantees *protection* from such neglect and exposure as a flock, faithlessly shepherded, would suffer. Saved by Christ.

"*Neither shall they be lacking:*" this means, not one sheep shall be missing. This is therefore a prophecy of *Judah's restoration from Babylon;* yet its fulness of significance can only be realised in the final restoration of both "Judah" and "Israel" (comp. ver. 6) out of all countries—a prophecy never yet accomplished. While *spiritually* it foreshadows the *gathering together of all Christ's redeemed*, under the One Shepherd of the sheep.

See *Addenda:* NEGLIGENT PASTORS.

Ver. 5. *Theme:* THE KINGDOM OF THE MESSIAH.

The prophetic writings are replete with appropriate and sublime descriptions of the personal appearing, redeeming works, and mediatorial offices of the promised Messiah. The text describes the Redeemer's character, as assuming human nature and establishing His kingdom of grace; and directs our attention to the following important truths:

I. **The person of the Messiah.** "Behold the days come," &c. In these words we may observe three things relative to the coming Messiah:—

1. *His human incarnation.* "A Branch." This term is often used by the prophets to represent Christ's assumption of our nature as "the seed of the woman," according to the Divine promise (Gen. iii. 15). To accomplish this and similar promises, the Lord declares in the text, "Behold the days come that I will raise unto David a righteous branch." The Father loved the world, promised, and actually "sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that we might live through Him." Thus, the Lord "raised" in the royal house and lineage of David "a Branch;" as it is written, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of His roots." The scheme of redemption rendered it necessary for Christ to "take on Him the seed of Abraham," that He might suffer and die for our sins (Heb. ii. 10, 17).

2. *His personal perfection.* "A righteous branch." In His *essential nature* as God, Jesus Christ was infinitely pure, holy, just, and good. And in His *human nature* as man He was perfectly righteous and sinless. Had not Christ been sinless, He could not have atoned for our sins.

3. *His sovereign character.* "A King shall reign." The Jews were taught to expect their Messiah as an illustrious Prince and prosperous monarch. But, in general, they mistook the precise meaning of the prophets, and expected Him as a *temporal*, and not as a *spiritual*, sovereign. He possessed every qualification requisite for the dignity of His character. He is infinite in wisdom, righteousness, power, and goodness. He is not only a *Prophet* to instruct, a *Priest* to atone, but also a *King* to rule and save His people.

II. **The nature of His kingdom.** "A King shall reign and prosper," &c. The empire of Christ is of a complex character, and comprehends His vast dominion over all things, as the Creator and Preserver of mankind, and as the Redeemer and Saviour of them that believe. In this extended view the Messiah possesses:—

1. *A universal kingdom.* His presence fills all space, and His power is unlimited. He reigns in His providence over all His creatures, and is "the King of kings, and Lord of lords." He is the sovereign proprietor of all things, and sways His sceptre both in heaven and in earth. All things are dependent on His power, and subject

to His control, "who is over all, God blessed for ever."

2. *A mediatorial kingdom.* This refers to Christ's *official* character, as the "mediator between God and man." When Christ engaged in the cause of our redemption He founded a kingdom of mediation for the redemption of mankind. The Saviour reigns as the conqueror of all our enemies as "the Prince of Peace and the King of Zion," in His redeeming and mediatorial character (Phil. ii. 5–11).

3. *A spiritual kingdom.* The kingdom which Christ established in the work of redemption is designed in its *personal influence* to destroy sin, that "grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life." Our Lord declares the kingdom of God is *within you.* It is an eternal empire of grace, producing righteousness, peace, and "joy in the Holy Ghost."

4. *A celestial kingdom.* Heaven is often denominated a *kingdom*, and is the promised inheritance of the Lord's faithful people (Luke xii. 32). The kingdom of grace here prepares and leads to the kingdom of glory hereafter. Christ waits to receive and welcome His followers into His everlasting kingdom, that they may participate His glory, dwell in His presence, and reign with Him for ever.

III. The character of His reign. "A king shall reign and prosper," &c.

1. *Christ's reign is legitimate.* He is no impostor. He reigns by rational and eternal right as Sovereign of the universe; and as mediator He reigns in the kingdom of grace by *Divine appointment, authority,* and *sanction.* The kingdom of Christ is founded on principles of *sound reason,* and therefore all rational beings ought to submit to His government.

2. *Christ's reign is righteous.* He is a merciful and gracious Sovereign, and though He "executes judgment and justice in the earth," it is in *mercy* and *love* to mankind.

3. *Christ's reign is prosperous.* Whatever opposition His kingdom meets with, "*He shall prosper.*" All the schemes He adopts, and the means He employs, are devised by infinite wisdom and accompanied by *omnipotent* energy; and therefore His reign must succeed. His perfections, declarations, promises, gospel, and Spirit, secure the prosperity of His cause (Heb. i. 8; Dan. ii. 44; John xvi. 8).

4. *Christ's reign is everlasting.* All other kings are mortal, and therefore die and leave their dignities to their successors. All temporal kingdoms rise and fall, and will ultimately perish in the wreck of worlds; but Christ is the "King eternal and immortal, and His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation."

To improve the subject, consider: *The dignity of Christ's person and character, the folly and misery of His enemies,* and *the duty and happiness of His subjects.*—*Sketches of Sermons.*

Theme: THE NATURE AND PROSPERITY OF MESSIAH'S REIGN.

Christ is described in His distinct and dissimilar parts of His character by Jeremiah: "*A branch,*" to denote His human nature and origin: "*the righteous branch,*" to denote His essential righteousness in Himself, and the source of righteousness to believers: and their "*King,*" to direct attention to His spiritual dominion.

I. The character of Christ. There are three things we look for in a king:

1. *Supreme power* (Ephes. i. 21; Rom. ix. 5).

2. *Legislative authority.* Christ's right to legislate, as being *proprietor* of all (John i. 10; Col. i. 16) and *redeemer* of all; for He "bought us with a price."

3. *Righteous administration.* There must be *wisdom,* or the monarch's reign would be one of folly; *justice,* or tolerate licentiousness; *mercy,* or be despotic (Matt. xii. 20).

II. The nature of Christ's reign.

1. *Spiritual.* Seat of His government is in the human spirit (Luke xvii. 20; Rom. xiv. 17).

2. *Equitable.* Prohibits all evil, enjoins all good (Heb. i. 8).

3. *Benevolent.* Alexanders and Cæsars were "warriors with confused noise and

garments rolled in blood;" but Christ (Isa. xlii. 2).

4. *Perpetual.* Earthly kingdoms may rise and fall (Isa. ix. 7; Heb. i. 8).

III. The prosperity with which His reign shall be attended. To prosper as king, implies:

1. To have an increase of willing subjects.

2. To have adequate provision for supply of all their wants.

3. To secure their real happiness (Psa. lxxii. 7–8).

4. To subjugate or destroy His enemies (Isa. lx. 12).

Observe:

1. If Christ shall reign and prosper, how great is the folly of being His adversaries!

2. This subject should inspire the Christian with joy and gratitude (Acts xv. 3; Rev. xix. 6, 7).

3. We should do our utmost to extend the Redeemer's triumphs.—From *Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*

Ver. 6. *Theme:* A BRIGHT ERA FOR MANKIND. "In His days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely."

Eagerly we scan those prophecies which open a gracious future for humanity. Especially when our Lord Jesus is predicted as being the author of that blissful change. For it is so desirable both for *human good* and the *Saviour's glory.*

(*a.*) The present prevailing irreligion, with all the force of a dark contrast, makes the outlook alluring to contemplate.

(*b.*) The slow progress of evangelisation gives zest to the anticipation of the grand success which shall come "in those days" through the direct interposition of Heaven.

HAS THIS PROPHECY BEEN FULFILLED? Does it allude to *the spiritual salvation of the spiritual Judah* as the result of gospel preaching in this Christian era? Or, to *the final gathering together of Jews into their own land?* Or, to *the millennial day when the spiritual Israel will be made triumphant* over all the forces of evil, and reign in peace and safety on the earth?

I. An age anticipated which shall belong to Christ. Called "His days."

1. Have those days *been realised in the Christian era?* Certainly Christianity in some sense has fulfilled this prediction. It is an era when, not Moses, but Christ gives the impress to, and dwells supreme in, the dispensation. Jesus is now "the Lord our Righteousness." And if we may interpret "Judah and Israel" spiritually, then He *has* "saved us."

But the *ancient people of God are here literally meant.* And they have not as yet come to call Jesus "the Lord our Righteousness;" they do not "dwell safely," for they are wanderers upon the earth. The *promise in ver.* 8 has not yet been fulfilled even in a spiritual sense: Israel has not been all won to Christ.

2. *Those days have yet to dawn.* For when they come Israel shall acknowledge Christ.

(*a.*) There may be an actual fulfilment of this promise for the tribes of Judah and Israel. And who would not welcome it? for they have been a sad people long afflicted. Yet even more because of the promises which attend the time of their restoration (Rom. xi. 11, 12, 15, 25, 26).

(*b.*) But the allusion may be to the millennial age: when (ver. 5) the "King shall reign." We cannot say these are the days of Christ; for the devil rules a wider dominion! But "the kingdom of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ." For this grand future *pray, work,* and *hope.*

II. The days of Christ's ascendancy shall be distinguished by the enjoyments of salvation.

(*a.*) *Oppression and destruction* marked the days of despotic monarchies—the Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzar, Frederick the Great, Bonaparte.

(*b.*) *Safety has not hitherto been the experience of the Jewish nation.* Every age finds them a wronged and outraged people. But when Messiah comes they will be molested no more.

(*c.*) *Neither has Israel, spiritually considered, dwelt safely.* The souls of Christ's people are always imperilled and assailed by the forces of evil

1. *What do "safety and salvation" here mean?*—If the Hebrew interpretation be correct, it means *deliverance from the nations*, and *possession of their own country*, where they would dwell in peace. If the spiritual interpretation be correct, it means, *Christ's followers ransomed from the enemy, piety victorious over sin*, earth won for Christ. Then the foe disturbs our peace no more, threatens our safety no more, either by insinuating doubt, planning temptation, or chilling love. What days those! when all will be blessed in Jesus; when all shall know the Lord, &c., and the Church shall be happy in Jesus' favour, free from the dread of ills!

2. *In the individual believer these promises are already fulfilled.* He is "saved," and "dwells safely" in Christ. But that personal bliss is the possession of few now. "Christ's days" shall spread it far and wide—to Jew and Gentile.

III. For the coming of Christ's days we may well with eagerness yearn.

1. *They are desirable.* What a joyous outlook! Ended our "sowing precious seed with tears," our grief over the desolations of sin, our shame for the scorn and rejection of Christ, our struggles with evil around.

2. *We live amid danger now.* Therefore anxiety and watchfulness: therefore peace is disturbed and joy marred. Then shall we realise rest and delight. "How long, O Lord, how long?" Not long, if we *speed the time by diligent work*—for the conversion of the heathen and the salvation of those who are near. Not long, if we speed the time by *earnest prayer*. "Thy kingdom come." Let us "give Him no rest till He arise and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

Ver. 6. *Theme*. "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." We may view this as—

I. An announcement of an important truth.

1. The Lord is our righteousness inasmuch as the purpose and plan of justifying sinners originated with Him.

2. Inasmuch as He Himself has alone procured righteousness for us.

3. Inasmuch as it is through His grace and by His free donation that we receive righteousness.

II. An utterance of personal belief and confidence.

The language of faith, hope, joy, gratitude.

III. A directory to the spiritual inquirer.

Anxious sinners wish to know the way of acceptance with God. The text is a brief but satisfactory answer.—*Dr. W. Lindsay-Alexander* (of Edinburgh), "*The Hive.*"

Theme: CHRIST'S SUPREME NAME.

Redemption by a crucified Redeemer is the capital theme of Divine revelation. It is completely interwoven with the golden network of the prophetic page—for to Him give all the prophets witness—whilst the evangelists echo and re-echo the exhaustless theme.

The Gospel is not known as a system of *promises* simply, though these are exceedingly great and precious; not as a system of *morals*, though its morality is of the highest kind; nor as a system of *legislation* simply, though it contains the code of God's moral government; but it is pre-eminently known as a system of *reconciliation*.

This doctrine forms the key to the Christian system. To this one work all dispensations point. This all *sacrifices* illustrate. This all *promises* embody. This all *Providence* is bowed to subserve. This all *heaven* stoops to witness. This all *hell* resists and opposes. This all *bad* men revile or neglect. This all *good* men venerate and love. Surely shall one say, *In the Lord Jehovah have I* righteousness and strength. "*This is the name by which He shall be called,*" *etc.*

It is common with the prophets to console the Jews under their calamities with the prospect of Messiah's approach, as a proof that if the Church was to be preserved till His coming, it should not be destroyed in its present exigency. Here the transit is easy from the corrupt pastors that destroyed Israel to the true Shepherd who should redeem it. He was to be the descendant of their shepherd-king.

1. Exhibit the delightful character under which Christ is portrayed.

2. Specify some of the circumstances that put an emphasis and value upon the redemption He has achieved.

I. Exhibit the delightful character under which Christ is here presented. The Lord is our righteousness.

Every title which Christ bears opens a source of consolation to His people. They are so many beautiful notices of Himself, and shadow forth blessings.

i. *In His essential dignity.* "The Lord." *Jehovah.* Incommunicableness.

We are thus led up before the springs of Time. "*His goings forth have been of old from everlasting.*" Before the dayspring knew its place. All things were derived from Him; He was before all things were; He shall be when they cease to exist. The message to the seven churches begins with, "*Grace, mercy, peace, from Him* THAT IS, *and* WAS, *and is to* COME, *the Almighty:*" and He who there speaks says, "*I am Alpha and Omega.*" The JEHOVAH of the Old Testament is the LORD of the New: *the seed of David: over all God.*

All the evidence concurs in this, that the Redeemer of the world was to be Divine as well as human. This was necessary that He might transact our salvation on equal terms, and that the virtue of His offering might be available and efficacious on our behalf. Take away His *humanity*, and He would have no sacrifice to offer: take away His *divinity*, and His sacrifice would have no inherent merit. The doctrines of Christ's *merit* and of Christ's *Divinity* are inseparable, for if the one be removed, the other must fall, of course; and with them the whole fabric of our redemption.

ii. *His mediatorial office.* "Our righteousness." So important is this that our Lord takes His name from it. It is the title by which He loves to be distinguished, and all who would speak to His honour must make mention of His righteousness. It was no unusual thing for the warriors, princes, and great men of antiquity to take their names from the countries conquered, or the exploits they had achieved. As Scipio from his conquest of Africa, and *Coriolanus* from his over the *Corioli*. So Christ from redemption. In the name of Jesus the whole Gospel lies hid.

The *necessity* for this scheme of substitution arose out of human depravity, and the inflexible rectitude of the Divine government. It was necessary that as we had lost our righteousness it should be restored in Christ. "*Die He, or justice must.*" To fulfil the high condition Jesus interposed. Here was glory for our meanness, suffering for our ransom. *It was exacted.*

Here we see the grand reality to which all the shadows of the Jewish law pointed. "*It became Him,*" *etc.*

iii. *In the spiritual relation in which He stands to His people*—intended in the term "*our* righteousness."

A spiritual union is presupposed between us and Him, of which faith is the connecting link—in consequence of which the penalty we incurred is borne by Him, and the righteousness He wrought out on Calvary is applied to us. The inheritance was to be redeemed by the GOEL or near kinsman. "*Both He that sanctifieth,*" *etc.*

Rest not till you can rest in Christ, as made of God to you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is the personal experience and the personal application of Christ's benefits which we need. "*I know whom I have believed.*" "*I know my Redeemer.*"

II. Specify some considerations which put an emphasis and value upon redemption, and heighten our sense of its importance.

i. *The work of redemption has ennobled our nature and shed a lustre over the annals of our world.* He took not on Him the nature of angels—laid not hold on them. Those first-born sons of immortality were left in their sins. No "mighty to save" appeared for them. No ark in their deluge: no refuge city in their land: no brazen serpent in their camp: no star of Bethlehem in their sky!

Christ ennobles all with which He comes in contact. The very *place* is memorable. "*Thou Bethlehem Ephrata.*" The *times* are memorable. Jesus fills an era of His own. "In His DAYS Judah saved." We date from His death—we memorialise His death—"*show forth the Lord's death.*"

ii. *It eclipses and throws into the shade the greatest of the Divine works.* "No more say the Lord liveth, who brought Israel from Egypt." Babylon was to eclipse the deliverance from Egypt—and Calvary that of Babylon.

iii. *It enhances the value of temporal blessings following in its train.* "Judah shall be saved"—when God is known as her righteousness.

iv. *It forms a permanent bond of union among subjects of grace.* "Judah and Israel."

Finally, *judge of the grandeur of the work* by the doom denounced against those who despise and reject it. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish." "Of how much sorer punishment," &c.—*S. Thodey*, A.D. 1838.

Vers. 5–6. *Theme:* THE CHRISTIAN CREED SUMMARISED.

The ancient fathers agreed that this prophecy was not fulfilled on the return of the Jews under Zerubbabel, but is accomplished by the restoration of all true Israelites in Christ.

I. The manhood of the Messiah is here declared. "I will raise unto David a righteous branch" (comp. Isa. xi. 1).

II. Christ's royal majesty and judicial authority are prophetically announced. "And a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

III. His saving power and love as our Redeemer are also affirmed. "In His days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely."

IV. Here is a clear assertion that He who has been pre-announced as Very Man of the seed of David, and as an Eternal King and Righteous Judge, and as a mighty Saviour and Deliverer, is also the LORD, JEHOVAH, Very God, and, being Very God as well as Very Man, is OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.—*Bishop Wordsworth.*

Theme: CHRIST'S RIGHT TO THIS NAME VINDICATED.

To speak of a person as "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," and to say that *His* name was to be called JEHOVAH, would be very dangerous unless His name really was Jehovah.

I. According to the whole teaching of the Christian Scripture, it cannot be predicated of Jehovah, regarded as a name of God the Father, that *He* is "our righteousness." On the contrary, the Father is our righteous Lawgiver and Judge, and we are liable to Him for the punishment of our sins.

II. We may safely predicate "our righteousness" of Christ, who is here called "the Lord our righteousness."

For the Apostle has expressly taught us that "*Christ* is made unto us *righteousness*" (1 Cor. i. 30). As *Man* He was able to suffer for us: as *God* He is able to reconcile the Father to us.

Not only, therefore, may Christ "our righteousness" be called JEHOVAH, but by being also called "OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" he is thereby *distinguished from* God the Father, and becomes *our* Jehovah and *our* righteousness: the God-Man consecrated to man's redemption.—Comp. *Bishop Pearson* on this text, Art. ii. p. 148.

Theme: "JEHOVA JUSTITIA NOSTRA."

This name is compounded of these three words—all of them essential: and it makes a "threefold cord which cannot be broken;" which, except it be entire, and have all three, it loseth the virtue, it worketh nothing.

i. "JEHOVA." Why that must be a part of this name. David shows (Ps. lxxi. 16), because *only His* righteousness is worth remembering; and no other is fit to be mentioned. For *our own* "righteousness" is odious (Isa. lxiv. 6, and Phil. iv. 8).

ii. JUSTITIA. Why "*righteousness*" rather than "salvation" or "peace"?

Because salvation and peace are the fruits which grow on "Righteousness" as the "Branch" (Isa. xxxiii. 7).

iii. JEHOVA JUSTITIA. Why is "Jehovah" here associated with "righteousness" rather than with some other attribute, as of "power" or "mercy"? Because it is "God with us" (Isa. vii. 10), chiefly in this property of righteousness as above all other Divine properties.

David calls Him *Jehova misericordia* (Ps. lix. 17), and true it is that *mercy* is ours. But *justice* is against us; and except "justice" also be made "ours," all is not as it should be. But if justice—*that in God which only is against us*—might be made for us, then are we safe. Therefore, all our thought is how we may get "*mercy to triumph over justice*" (Jas. ii. 13), or how we may get them to *meet and be friends* (Ps. lxxxv. 10). Hence, therefore, neither *Jehova potentia* nor *Jehova misericordia* are enough, but it must be *Jehova justitia*.

iv. NOSTRA. Without this "Jehovah" alone doth not concern us, while "Jehovah justitia" is wholly against us. But if He be not alone "righteousness," but *ours* too, we have our desires. Verily this possessive word of application is all in all.—*Bishop Andrewes* (Works, vol. v. Sermon 5). See further *Noticeable Topics*.

Vers. 7, 8. Repeated from chap. xvi. 14, 15. See Homily *in loc.* But see *Noticeable Topics* below: "THE LOST TEN TRIBES."

Ver. 9. *Theme:* HORROR OVER FAITHLESS PROPHETS. The Prophet seems "beside himself for God" as Paul was; a mad enthusiast; "like a man whom wine hath overcome." He had sufficient cause.

I. Intense grief over false teachers. "Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets." 1. Their *wickedness* in teaching delusions. This incensed his *pious* soul. 2. Their *ruinous misleading* of the nation. This disturbed his *patriotic* spirit.

II. Profound terror over approaching disasters. "All my bones shake, I am like a drunken man." For, 1. *He himself clearly knew the disasters* which false prophets sought to obscure and hide. 2. He *vividly apprehended the agonies into which his nation* would speedily be plunged. See *Addenda:* NEGLIGENT PASTORS.

III. Deepest awe over God's terribleness. "Because of the Lord and the words of His holiness." 1. He knew *with whom these prophets were trifling.* "And knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." 2. *He realised the compulsion of God's holy words.* God never threatened willingly; but when necessity led Him to pronounce doom, it was appalling to think of what it meant.

Vers. 10–12. *Theme:* GOD'S WRATH OVER NATIONAL VICES. Here is a catalogue of criminalities, together with their penalties.

I. Outrages by man against God. Sin has manifold names and shapes, all offensive. Here is a specification of some especially odious.

1. *Immorality.* "Land full of adulterers." *Literal:* for fornication was the common attendant of idolatry. And this by "prophets," and by the people throughout the land, who were encouraged thereto by the example of their leaders. *Spiritual* adultery also; Israel had forsaken her Husband for idols (Jer. iii. 8–10, 20).

2. *Foul speech,* "swearing." Margin, *cursing.* [This interpretation can only be given by licence, for the text most probably means, because of *the curse* (*of God*) the land mourneth]. Yet Hosea (iv. 2, 3) warrants the use of the text as it stands in the E.V. God *hears* and *hates* blasphemous language.

3. *Persistent wrongdoing.* "Their *course* is evil, and their *force* is not right." 1. The *current* of their life is bad. Low public tastes and manners. 2. The *intention* of their life is dishonourable; they use their *personal* powers ("*force*") and *civil* powers and *ecclesiastical* powers, not for rectitude, but deceit and oppression and impiety.

4. *Sacrilege.* 1. *Religious officers*

were themselves "*profane*" (ver 11). 2. *Holy scenes* were degraded by "*wickedness.*"

II. Disasters from God upon man. Sin has manifold penalties and punishments; here is an enumeration of some especially disastrous.

1. *Pleasures all desolated.* "Pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up" (ver. 10). For it should be recognised that men occupy a "*wilderness.*" Earth is not naturally fruitful of luxury and pleasure. All its "*pleasant places*" are God's gifts, specially provided for us. Therefore He can easily turn its pleasures into drought, and He will do so if we abuse His grace. Then life becomes a blank waste, and the heart is left without comfort.

2. *False ways made fatal.* God will allow them to pursue "their way" (ver. 12); give them up to their heart's desire; not arresting them, simply let them alone to become *befooled, besotted, benighted.* "*In the darkness*" they should *not be shown their peril* so as to become alarmed, and certainly *should not find escape*, but slide down into the blackness of darkness for ever.

3. *Forces of evil should seize them.* Sin when indulged in the heart and habits assumes a tyrannical despotism, and "*drives on*" the sinner (ver. 12). Once sin merely pleaded and decoyed, now it forces and masters the soul; and the sinner shall "*fall*"—where? "*Therein,*" *i.e.*, into the depths of woe, which end the "slippery ways of darkness."

4. *God Himself will visit sinners with evil* (ver. 12). Though God delays the judgment, yet, (1.) *There comes a time of judgment,* "even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord." (2.) *Then God will Himself bring evil upon them.* "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?" —*Comp. Homily* on chap. xi. 25.

Vers. 13, 14. *Theme:* COMPARATIVE SINFULNESS. "'*Folly*' in the prophets of Samaria, . . . in the prophets of Jerusalem *an horrible* thing."

I. Sins are not regarded by God as of equal magnitude.

1. *Some evils are mistakes.* "Folly," and "they cause to err."

2. Others are *malignant.* "Horrible thing," "wickedness."

II. Sins take their colour and degree from circumstances.

1. The *location of our life* affects the moral qualities of conduct. The same acts done "in Samaria" had less wrong in them than when done "in Jerusalem," because there was *more religious light* in Jerusalem.

2. *Guilt is guiltiest when done in the face of God.* It was *stupidity* when done "*in Baal,*" in connection with Baal. It was absolutely "horrible" when done in *the Temple* in Jerusalem, the seat of God's Holy Throne and Shekinah glory. Thus "exalted unto heaven," they should be "thrust down to hell."

III. Sins involve all wrong-doers in pitiable distress.

1. Though proportioned to the degree of guiltiness, yet *the lightest punishment of sin must be appalling.* The "few stripes" involve banishment from God and heaven, for "the unclean shall not dwell therein."

2. *The heaviest woes of sin are terrifying to contemplate.* "They are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah." *Overwhelmed* with ruin, and destroyed with "fire and brimstone."

Ver. 14. *Theme:* STRENGTHENING THE HANDS OF THE WICKED. "*I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing. They strengthen the hands of evil-doers, that none doth return from his wickedness.*"

I. All sin is horrible in its nature. It is contrary to the character and will of an Infinite Being — a Being of glorious purity, supreme authority, and almighty power; a Being who cannot be tempted with evil, nor even look on iniquity, &c.

II. To strengthen the hands and hinder the repentance of sinners is to oppose the great plan of the Divine government.

III. It tends to the misery of mankind, and is the reverse of that bene-

volence which ought to govern us in all our conduct.

IV. It is to operate with that evil spirit who works in the children of disobedience.

V. It is a horrible thing, because we thus become partakers of their sins.

VI. It is directly contrary to God's commands, and marked with His peculiar abhorrence.

Application :—

To teachers of religion; to Christians in general; to heads of families; to the young. It is also horrible to be strengthened in evil-doing. — *Dr. Lathrop.*

Ver. 16. *Theme:* PREACHERS TESTED BY THEIR HEARERS.

I. False preaching may be discovered.

1. It is here *described.* "A vision of their own heart," &c.; *entertain with fanciful theories.*

2. It may be *detected.* "They make you vain;" *deceive with false hopes.* In ver. 17 their preaching is further described.

(*a.*) To *despisers of God* peace is promised.

(*b.*) To *wilful sinners* immunity is assured.

II. Hearers must refuse wrong teaching. The *Church*, and *not her ministers*, is the pillar and ground of the truth.

1. *The exercise of the right* of "trying the spirits whether they be of God" *has its perils and difficulties.* Ignorant, misguided, and narrow-minded men may make a preacher "an offender for a word." Timid souls may take quick alarm. Impatient listeners may judge in haste and without ample reasons.

2. *Yet the non-exercise of this right is a grave misdemeanour on the part of the Church.* God *commands* hearers to "take heed how they hear," and to "try the spirits," &c. Not to do so indicates spiritual inertia, intellectual indifference, and neglect of highest trusts. It exposes the Church to the grossest misleading, and leaves the pulpit to reckless adventurers.

III. God's truth is perceivable by the common people. Rome and arrogant priests would have us believe that hearers are to receive what is taught them, being incapable of judging their teachers.

1. *The doctrine of the Law was sufficient* to guide Judah concerning the teachings of prophets. "He who ran might read," if he sought to know.

2. Certainly, therefore, *the doctrines of the Gospel are plain* to men's understanding. "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

LESSONS—

1. Seek to know God's truth by personal study.

2. Suffer no authority to usurp your own judgment.

3. Challenge any teacher who speaks not according to God's Word.

4. Take alarm at the preacher's messages which continually quiet the conscience and lull the heart.

5. Encourage and strengthen the earnest and outspoken preacher who may seem to "become men's enemy because he tells them the truth."

6. Make no truce with the sins which an honest preacher must denounce.

Ver. 20. *Theme:* GOD'S ANGER UNDERSTOOD AT LAST.

I. Because sinners will not duly consider their wickedness, therefore they misunderstand God's displeasure.

1. God sees our sin in its most awful aspects. "This abominable thing that I hate."

2. Sin blinds the judgment of sinners to its heinousness.

3. Divine anger is rightly fierce towards conduct which would ruin the order and happiness of the whole intelligent and moral world.

4. Men not understanding what sin is, and what it would despoil, think God harsh in His denunciations, and its penalties unduly severe.

II. Because sinners defy the forewarning of God's anger, therefore it will overwhelm them at the last.

1. God may defer the infliction, yet it cannot be delayed for ever.

2. Men may defy the threatenings

yet cannot thwart the thoughts of the Lord.

3. The full purposes of God upon wrong-doers will be ultimately "performed."

4. When God begins with punishment, His anger will not stay till it execute fullest vengeance.

III. When sinners feel the final woes their sins deserve, they will then awake to their just deserts.

1. *With this nation* it was so; Jerusalem was destroyed, and the exiles, taught by the sore adversity of captivity, saw then how *their sin* brought woes on themselves and ruin on their country.

2. Even *in this world* God makes sinners realise that their guilt is the cause of their misery of heart and life. As in perilous illness, or sudden calamity.

3. But it is *in the future* that the ungodly will learn their full iniquity, and justify the ways of God with them.

Ver. 22. *Theme:* THE SECRET OF A SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY. The true prophet will be characterised by *no indecent haste* (ver. 21) in assuming his office; but when commissioned, will *faithfully perform its duties.*

I. God's messenger — whence he gains his message. "Stood in My counsel." The Hebrew word "counsel" (sôd) means a confidential meeting of private friends. In Psa. xxv. 14 it is rendered the *secret*, i.e., confidential fellowship.

1. The preacher in private converse with God.

2. Coming from that hidden fellowship with a message to men.

3. Solemnity and grandeur of the office.

4. The majestic force of conviction thus sustaining the preacher while delivering his message.

II. God's messenger — what he preaches to men. "Caused My people to hear My words."

1. Divine truths gained from God's mouth (ver. 16).

2. Messages which foster no delusions (ver. 17).

3. Human theories ("visions," ver. 16) kept in abeyance that only God's "words" may gain heed.

4. God's utterances preached with the fervour which "*causes*" the "people to hear."

III. God's messenger—what effects crown a true ministry.

1. What is the Divine preacher's supreme aim? "To turn men from their evil way," &c.

2. What are the Divine teacher's best credentials? That his preaching does accomplish this result. "Then they *should have* turned them," &c.

3. What are the Divine preacher's richest rewards? Not worldly favour or power, but sinners turned from the error of their ways; souls won for Christ, his "crown of rejoicing."

Ver. 23. *Theme:* GOD'S NEARNESS EVERYWHERE.

Sinners, amid iniquitous doings, often resort to *atheistical subterfuges.* "God seeth us not." Needful, therefore, that they be confronted with the very *first principles of religion*—God's omnipresence and omniscience. National religion affirms these attributes of Deity. Revelation confirms and enlarges the doctrine. God everywhere: seeing all, near all.

I. All space is pervaded by God Himself. "He is at hand:" but equally He is "afar off." Near us on earth, as He is near those in heaven.

1. *Near us in personal presence.* God "stands before the door." "Compasses our path," &c.

2. Near us in *minute perception.* "His eyes behold," &c. "Run to and fro."

3. *Near us in mighty power.* "Doing according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth," as well as amid the "armies of heaven." "No place can either include Him or exclude Him." (*Henry.*)

II. All actions are performed in God's full gaze.

1. *The thought of secrecy is a delusion.* We live, move, think, act in the full blaze of the searching light of omniscience.

2. *The deeds of human life are Divinely scanned.* He reads them through and through — motive and method, all keenly and completely discerned.

3 *The judgments of God are based upon perfect knowledge of facts.* This is *consolatory* to the righteous—who are often misrepresented and maligned. This is *admonitory* to the irreligious—who will be destitute of all hope of excuse or covert in the day of decision.

4. *Such universal knowledge,* from *personal supervision of the universe,* throughout all time, is both necessary to a *proper idea of a God*—the world's Ruler, Sustainer, and *Judge;* and it is a guarantee of *rectitude* in the administration of *Divine providence now* and of *Divine rewards and punishment hereafter.* He will depend on no secondary source of knowledge of us—not even on the reports of angel ministers: "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

III. All scenes are equally favourable to revelations of God.

1. *In heaven,* where He seems locally "near," pure and redeemed souls may look upon Him, and glory in His cloudless presence.

2. *On earth,* though clouds and darkness hide Him, and we think of God as "afar off," He can yet make Himself known to our souls.

3. *Even in hell,* the scene of banishment from Him, God may—certainly He *can*—show Himself to outcast souls whose desire it will be to "hide themselves from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."—See *Addenda:* GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.

Vers. 23–24. *Theme:* THE ALL-PRESENT GOD.

Always present and everywhere present. Three interrogations are here submitted: but not to imply a question or doubt as to the facts interrogated, but to emphasise the truths brought thereby upon attention.

I. The sublime fact of *God's omnipresence* is affirmed (ver. 23); God *is* near at hand, and *is* present afar off.

ii. The co-ordinate truth of God's *omniscience* (ver. 24). There are *no* secret places to God.

iii. The *spirituality* of God — His immaterial essence is likewise affirmed:—for He *fills* the universe, "heaven and earth;" the Great Spirit present everywhere.

I. Verily this omnipresent Spiritual Being is worthy of human worship. If we had to search out whom to adore and obey, *who can compare with God.*

1. Such attributes *constrain* our homage.

2. Such greatness impresses on us the thought that *it is well that we be reconciled* to One so majestic and mighty.

3. Such a God, everywhere near, it is easy to worship and wise to trust. He can *know* all things on our behalf and *do* all we need.

II. Equally clear it is that any lower object of worship is an error.

1. *Idolatry is reprehensible.* It elevates *inferiors* (even if idols had any real existence) into *ascendancy.* It *wrongs* God; it gives His glory to another; and it *angers* Him.

2. *Divided affections* are inconsistent with true homage. We *can* have but one God. He will not be placed on a level with another object of regard. "Beside Me is none else."

III. The loftiest reverence and truest loyalty become us in relation to a God so glorious.

1. *What thoughts and feelings can be too elevated* as we think of Him.

2. *What devotion* can exceed His claims.

3. What a *privilege* to be permitted to hide our life in such a God! "Hid with Christ in God."

IV. Security and peace are assured to the godly soul in the fact of the Divine omnipresence.

1. *God will guard him* from the lurking forces and subtleties of sin. "Can any hide," &c. God sees His saints in all scenes and circumstances, and will keep them safely.

2. *God will be ever near him;* his solace and sufficiency. He is at hand

to cherish, to guide—in life and death; till the redeemed soul reaches Him in heaven.

Vers. 28, 29. *Theme:* FIDELITY REQUIRED IN MINISTERS.

"*He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.*"

No order is more influential on society than ministers. The old prophets, if *faithful* to their God, diffused incalculable blessings through the land; if *false*, hardened the people in their wickedness. Ministers to-day produce like effects.

I. A solemn injunction to all who bear the office of the ministry.

The Word of God is put into our hands, and a dispensation is committed to us to preach it. This office we must execute "faithfully;" we must speak the Word—

1. *Unreservedly, without concealment* (Acts xx. 20, 27). Our *object* must be (Prov. xi. 30) our *manner* (2 Cor. iv. 2); and our *motto* (2 Cor. ii. 17).

2. *Impartially, without respect of persons.* All idea of pleasing men must be abandoned (Gal. i. 10). We must follow the fidelity of Paul (1 Thess. ii. 3–6), using "great plainness of speech" (2 Cor. iii. 12, 13).

3. *Boldly, without fear.* The prophets were so enjoined to speak (Jer. i. 8, 17; Ezek. ii. 6, 7). We must expect hatred (John iii. 19, 20): but our answer to opponents must be (Acts iv. 19, 20): and we must account suffering in this work our glory (Acts v. 41; Philip. ii. 17, 18).

This injunction is further enforced by—

II. A solemn appeal to the whole world.

1. *To our judgment.* "What is the chaff?" &c. Of what use were the assertions of false prophets? They only deceived the people to their ruin. Contrast with this the labours of Moses, David, Elijah, Paul. So the true minister (1 Tim. iv. 16; James v. 20). God declares the good effect of faithful teaching (see ver. 23).

2. *To our experience.* God's Word, if faithfully declared, is "quick and powerful" (Heb. iv. 12). Let any who has observed its effects say whether it is not "like *fire*," which dissolves the hardest metal, and "like a hammer," &c. Illustrate by Nineveh (Jonah iii. 4–10), and the scene at Pentecost (Acts ii. 37, &c.) Verily, "it is mighty through God" (2 Cor. x. 4, 5).

There are *cogent reasons for ministerial fidelity.* False doctrines save no man; but a simple preaching of "Christ crucified is the power of God unto salvation" (1 Cor. 1, 23, 24; Rom. i. 16). Many are thereby "turned to God from idols," &c. (1 Thess. i. 5, 9, 10).

i. *Let me now discharge my duty to you.* To me is committed the Word of God for you, and woe is unto me if I preach it not with all fidelity (1 Cor. ix. 16, 17; Ezek. xxxiii. 6–8).

ii. Let me *call on you to make a due improvement of my testimony.* Pray; seek God's blessing on the word preached, that it may prove to you "a savour of life unto life," and not of "death unto death." It is He who can make the "fire" burn, and the "hammer" so mighty that no rock can withstand its force.—*C. Simeon.*

Ver. 28. *Theme:* THE CHAFF AND THE WHEAT.

"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."

We may regard this question as suggestive of the superiority of the real to the superficial, and of the substance to the shadow, &c.

I. There are those who make more of the ritual and ceremonial in religion than they do of the spirit and power. But, "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."

II. There are those who make more of the speculative, theoretical, mysterious, and mystical in religion, than of the plain, practical, experimental, and useful. But, "What is the chaff?" &c.

III. There are those who make more of the name, profession, and show of godliness than they do of godliness itself. But, "What is the chaff?" &c.

IV. There are those who attach more importance to words, style, manner, appearance, and persons in preaching, than they do to the truth of Scripture. But, "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."—*Lay Preacher.*

Ver. 28. *Theme:* LYING COMMUNICATIONS AND GOD'S TRUTH.

"*What is the chaff to the wheat?*"

Jehovah had contrasted the godless inventions of false teachers with the truth of His own assertions, and having desired that each message might be stated as each deserved (ver. 28), proceeds to compare the lying communications of men with the true sayings of God.

In the corrupt heart within us there exists and labours so perverse and destructive a *tendency to prefer the chaff* to the wheat, as to incur the peril of choosing the false rather than the true. Therefore the attempt is here made to expose some of these misapprehensions.

I. What are worldly maxims compared with the Word of God, but as the chaff to the wheat? The whole world lieth under the power of the "father of lies."

1. *Regard the conduct of men of the world*, and by what maxim are they governed? to what authority do they bow? Of *Him* who created, sustains, redeemed them, or of *him* who deceived our first parents, and has ever since been spreading snares for their posterity?

2. *What lessons does the world teach its disciples?* To be lovers of pleasure more than the lovers of God; to worship the creature more than the Creator; to spend the precious season of mercy in laying up deceitful treasure for self; to say to the ensnared soul, "Soul, take thine ease," &c.; or, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Does not the world stigmatise all true religion, the privileges of Christian life, &c., as dreams of enthusiasm and inventions of hypocrisy; and a zealous pursuit of "the one thing needful" as the miserable error of "being righteous overmuch?"

"But *what is the chaff to the wheat?*"—the *authority* of the world compared with that of the Supreme Lord and King; the *ridicule* of the world with the indignation of God; the present *judgment of men* with the decisions of the Book which shall be opened at the last day; the world's *standard of morality* with Christ's requirement of a new birth?

There are vain dreamers (ver. 26). Suffer them not to mislead you from an atoning Saviour, &c. "Love not the world," &c.: but heed the faithful teachings of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.

II. What is *the value of* that legal righteousness in which carnal man delights, compared with the righteousness of Christ Jesus, as a ground of justification with God? "The carnal man is at enmity with God." He may deem himself, "as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless," and ask, "What lack I yet?" But *this delusion results from ignorance of the spirituality of the Divine law.* Let the Spirit's illumination come to him, and he will see himself no longer "rich, increased with goods, and in need of nothing; but wretched, miserable," &c.

The terrors of the law will sweep away all refuges of lies in which the sinner has sheltered himself, and drive him to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. *Repentance for sin* will not form that wedding garment which fits for a seat at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Nor is it by "*works of righteousness* which we have done" that we are accepted with God. *Christ alone* is "made unto us wisdom, righteousness," &c. "In Him must all the seed of Israel be justified."

"*What is the chaff to the wheat?*" Who that knows himself to be a sinner, who knows anything of the self-sufficient salvation of Jesus, would hesitate a moment between leaning on the broken reed of his own goodness, and coming in faith to Christ Jesus?

III. *What is* the happiness of the worldling compared with that of a child of God, but as chaff to the wheat? "There be many which say, Who will show us any good," &c.

1. An *eager desire after happiness* is implanted in us all.

2. Men *pursue phantoms of enjoyment*

as children might attempt to grasp a rainbow which has allured them.

3. But while all creature-joys elude, "*godliness is profitable*," &c. The believer has a "joy which no man taketh from him." "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him."

IV. What are the present pleasures of sin compared with the glories of heaven?

1. This glad prospect sinners have *forfeited for the mocking* indulgences of life. "Thou hast had thy good things."

2. *Christ Himself will effectually forbid heaven's joys to Christless souls.* "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge," &c.

Has a deceived heart turned you aside? Oh, seek the Spirit's illumination that ye may escape the delusion of earthly vanities and find rest in the Divine love now, and a part in the inheritance with the saints in light.—*Partly taken from an old and nameless MS.*

Vers. 28–29. *Theme:* SYMBOLS OF GOD'S WORD.

"*Wheat—Fire—Hammer.*"

I. In its own essential properties God's Word is thus manifold.

1. *A vital and vitalising substance:* "Wheat." (*a.*) Life *inheres in* it. (*b.*) It *nourishes* life in the eater.

2. *A refining and devouring element:* "Fire." (*a.*) It *imparts warmth.* (*b.*) It *purges from impurities*, from dross. (*c.*) It *consumes* rubbish.

3. *A subduing and destroying force:* "Hammer." (*a.*) *Beating down all resistance* in the regenerate heart. (*b.*) *Crushing and destroying* the hard and defiant life.

II. In its changeful aspects and revelations God's Word assumes these diversities. It comes in various forms to mankind.

1. *Corn covered with husk.* The *Divine* truth covered with the *human* exterior. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." Also the God-given *message and doctrine* mingled with the "chaff" of human theories and interpretations.

2. *Fire in its various forms and degrees. Attractive*, as the domestic fire which draws us around its genial glow. *Beneficial*, as the warmth to a chilled traveller, &c. *Terrible*, as the fiery furnace to those it would consume.

3. *A Hammer applied to different uses and with different force.* Fastening "a nail in a sure place," *i.e.*, enforcing Divine truth upon the conscience. "Breaking in pieces the rocky vessel," *i.e.*, crushing the alien and antagonistic heart.

II. In the ministries it effects, God's Word needs to be thus diverse.

1. *Men*, to whom God's Word is addressed, *are in such utterly dissimilar conditions.* (*a.*) Some need "*wheat*"—nourishment; food to sustain the Divine life within them. Men are as *soils* of various conditions, into which the wheat-grain is cast by the sower. (*b.*) Others are as *metal*—"gold and silver," which need refining; or as "wood, hay, stuble," only fit to be burned. (*c.*) Others are as the *rock*—either requiring the *stroke of affliction* to disclose their hidden treasures and graces; or as destined to the *stroke of destruction*, being valueless for any good end.

2. Men, to whom God's Word is addressed, *must respond to its manifold purposes.* For God's Word is to be utilised in all its various forms—"wheat, fire, hammer." (*a.*) *Cleanse the corn* of the chaff, and *eat the precious wheat.* (*b.*) *Welcome its purifying mission*, and live in its warm glow. (*c.*) *Submit to its strokes*, and become compliant to its powerful appeals.

Observe:

i. God's Word *can be refused* as "wheat," but *cannot be evaded* as "fire," nor *resisted* as "a hammer."

ii. If we *receive not the life it can bring* as food, we must feel its consuming and destroying force.

Theme: GOD'S WORD AND MAN'S WORD.

i. *The former is life and power* (wheat, fire, hammer); the latter pretence and weakness (dream, straw).

ii. *The two are not to be mixed with each other.* Why (add) the chaff to the wheat? This rendering is admissible. —*Lange.*

This shows,

i. *The vanity of all human imaginations in religion.* (*a.*) What do they afford to man? (*b.*) How much do they hinder!

ii. *The energy of spiritual truth.* Let us entreat God that our estimate may be practical.—*Cecil.*

Vers. 30–32. *Theme:* GOD THE ANTAGONIST OF FALSE TEACHERS. "*Behold*" stands in front of each of the three declarations: it commands notice; the subject is serious.

"*I am against:*" God in opposition to *their wicked work*, to their *baneful influence*, and to their *very* persons.

I. God repudiates stolen teachings. They were plagiarists (ver. 30). (1.) They *stole the words* they uttered from God's true prophets: (2.) They *stole away the Divine meaning* from those words by their perverse rendering: and (3.) They *stole one another's fictitious messages*, thus reiterating and propagating lies.

II. God denounces spurious messages. Having no message from God, the second class *used the solemn formula* by which Jehovah confirmed the validity of His messages through His own prophets; but in using it they *misused it:* only employing the form "Saith," instead of "Jehovah saith." (1.) Yet this *gave emphasis to their delusive inventions:* and hypocrites glibly revel in such free use of solemn asseverations. (2.) They thereby *deceived their hearers* into the belief that *God* said what they uttered. So with all who preach human fancies and theories instead of the Divine Word.

III. God contemns lying frivolities. (1.) They acted a solemn part *with shameful levity.* (2.) They *caused the people to err* by their spurious teachings.

Notice here:

i. What is a *teacher's qualification* for his work. That God should "send" and "command" him.

ii. *What is the test by which to try all preaching.* If it "profit not," it has no Divine origin or authority.

Vers. 33–40. *Theme:* THE BURDEN OF THE LORD ON TRIFLERS.

"Burden" (*Massa*) means hear *oracle*, prophetic discourse, and there is a play on this double sense of the Hebrew.

I. Men's scoffing inquiry, "What is the burden of the Lord?" (ver. 33).

1. *How they estimated God's message.* Another "burden"—oppressive oracle. So are all God's *messages and demands* to those "who stumble at the Word, being disobedient." And so will always be God's *prohibitions and threatenings* to those who love their sins and rebel against reproof.

2. *How they reviled God's messenger.* A mere burden-bearer. Not a messenger of good tidings—not even an ambassador from God—not greeted with respect as one who authoritatively taught them their duty. No! he only brought them troublesome words, tidings of disaster: and they taunted him therewith (comp. chap. xx. 8–10; see also Mal. i. 1).

II. God's derisive answers. You ask, "What burden?" "*Ye are the burden*" (see *Lit. Crit. supra* on ver. 33). And for you the burden shall be this:

1. *God will cast you off as being a "burden" to Him.* Or, since My word is burdensome in your eyes, you *shall have no more of it*, and that will be a far worse "burden" to you—deserted by God and denied His prophetic word!

2. *God will deal seriously with those triflers* (ver. 34). They used God's word in derision, but it would prove dreadfully literal in its fulfilment. Whosoever shall in mockery call the Lord's word a "burden," shall be visited in wrath.

3. *God will turn His messages* which were intended to prove blessings *into burdens*, which shall press heavily on every man.

On ver. 40 comp. chap. xx. 11.

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER XXIII.

Topic: JESUS, OUR LORD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. (VER. 6.)

Christians believe these words fulfilled in Jesus; Jews look for One to come. All acknowledge they refer to the *Messiah:* and we may form a judgment from this description as to what religious system they are suited best, that of the Jew, the Unitarian, or the Christian.

i. *The Christ*, or Messiah, of THE JEW. They believe a man of admirable wisdom will be born, descended from Royal family of David, shall go round the world to where Israelites are now in banishment, and persuade or compel Gentile rulers to let His people return to their native land. There, having rebuilt Temple, and re-established ancient worship, they will be exposed to envy of nations, who will invade and make war upon their country; but, at last, delivered from all their troubles under the anointed Prince, all the world shall become Jews like themselves, and send every year gifts and sacrifices to Temple of Jerusalem.

ii. *The Messiah* of the UNITARIANS. Already come; Jesus of Nazareth the Saviour, foretold by ancient prophecy. But, when Christ came, He was nothing more than a man; born (so many argue), not of a virgin, but of Joseph and Mary his wife; sent by God to preach to mankind a holy life, and that all men hereafter should be raised from the dead, and be rewarded according to their works.

iii. *The Messiah* of CHRISTIANS. Jesus; formed as man, but God Himself, eternally one with Father; came from heaven, preached righteousness and resurrection, but these only subordinate ends; by His obedience, merits, and atonement by blood to take off from the world that curse under which, since Adam, it had been.

Examine meaning of language in text.

I. This prophecy is fulfilled *to the Jews, who expect in their Christ an earthly* monarch, and *to Christians*, who believe that Christ is a Divine and heavenly monarch. Jews suppose Christ will be man like ourselves, prophet like Moses, but also a mighty conqueror and king. Christians believe that Christ from all eternity has been, together with the Father and Holy Ghost, the Creator and Governor of the world; that He now sitteth in human form at right hand of Father's glory; will be Judge of world at last. But to Unitarians, with whom Christ was a mere prophet, having no power to rule world, no privilege of doing good to His Church, how can this prophecy be fulfilled in Christ? On earth, and in human nature, He was very unlike a "king;" and if He were nothing beyond man, these words are inapplicable to Him.

II. This prophecy points **out the salvation Christ would effect.** "In His days, saith the Lord, Judah shall be saved." Jews and Christians have reasons, though different, for applying prophecy to Messiah. They suppose He will save them from worldly troubles; we believe that He saves all who trust in Him from burthen of sins and wrath of God. But with what salvation do Unitarians accredit Christ? They answer: By bringing a more perfect moral law, He taught us to avoid sin, and thus *saved us from sin;* that by teaching resurrection and rising Himself, He *saved us from fear of death;* that by abolishing law of Moses, He *saved us from burdensome ceremonies.* In answer: Morality was equally enforced under Old Testament; resurrection believed in; and Christ did not destroy and abolish the law.

III. This prophecy **gives a Divine title to the Messiah: "The Lord our Righteousness."** Both Jews and Unitarians must be perplexed, since neither allow the Saviour foretold was to be other than mortal man. But the word "Lord" is in Hebrew JEHOVAH. Accordingly, we accept this as proof that the Messiah must not only be man but God. This is not refuted by the attempt to show from chapter xxiii. 16, that it is *not the Saviour* who should bear this awful name, but *Judah:* for that text should read, "He, who calleth Jerusalem, is the

Lord our righteousness;" and also, in this present verse, *both Judah and Israel* are united in blessing by Messiah; so that, if Judah be meant by this title, Israel must also; and the word should be, not "*He* shall be called," but "*they* shall be." Turn it as we may, this passage remains unconquerable by those who deny Jesus to be GOD and LORD; for it is allowed He is Messiah, and Messiah is no other than JEHOVAH.

IV. This prophecy further gives to Christ the title of "Our righteousness." Jews and heretics cannot explain this away; they deny that the blood of Christ is a sacrifice, or satisfaction, for the sins of the world; that we are justified by His death. Yet here, the Man, Messiah, is not only JEHOVAH, but in His own Person He is "our righteousness." But how can man or God become the righteousness of sinful creatures, unless He suffer in their stead the punishment of their sin, and in their stead obey and fulfil the law? How can He make another being righteous, except by *proving him innocent of faults*, or obeying the laws on behalf of the offender, *bearing the faults on Himself*, and suffering his punishment? Hence it is by the imputed merits, obedience, and death of Christ that we are cleansed from sin and made righteous in the sight of God.

We are herein called to acknowledge in Christ a mighty God and most merciful Saviour: Advocate, pleading on our behalf His own merits; High Priest, who offered up His own life for us; Lamb, whose blood washed us clean. Let us by every action and affection show our faith, love, and thankfulness. Remember that Christ is our righteousness alone; no merit in us; and in Him is the sinner's hope.—*Condensed and arranged from* BISHOP REGINALD HEBER, A.D. 1838.

Topic: THE RECOVERY OF THE TEN LOST TRIBES FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY. (Ver. 8.)

Israel, or the Ten Lost Tribes, were carried captive into Assyria in 725 B.C. Their captivity was complete in number and time—to this day they have not returned. The captivity of Judah in 588 was partial in number and time; they returned and remained until finally scattered about the year 70 A.D. Now they are all in exile, but they are to return again to their own land. And as surely as the Jews now say, "The Lord liveth which brought up His people out of Egypt," so will they by and by say, "*The Lord liveth which brought up His people out of the North country, and from all the countries whither He had driven them.*"

I. This is, and has been, the expectation of the Church for ages. From earliest centuries this has been a prevailing idea. Six years after the destruction of Jerusalem, as foretold by the prophets and the Saviour, a child was born who in his life was to confront this idea in prophecy. Hadrian, the Roman Emperor, born in 76 A.D., died in 138. He hated, with a deadly hatred, the Jews and the Christians. What of the city of Jerusalem was standing in his day he destroyed, and built a new city on the old site and called it after himself, Elia Capitolina. Then he forbade Jew or Christian, under penalty of death, to enter the same, declaring that he would show them the weakness of their hope and falsity of their prophets.

Again, there was born in Constantinople another child, Nov. 17, A.D. 331, who died June 26, A.D. 363, named Flavius Claudius Julianus, surnamed Julian the Apostate. He said that he would make God a liar and prophecy false, for he would gather the Jews and build the Temple. Some of the Jews he did gather, and he began to build the Temple, but God was against him by earthquake and by balls of fire out of the ground, so he ceased to fight against God. Even England has sought to bring back *Israel* before the time. Three successive times she has conquered Palestine, and given it over to the Turks for keeping. Nay, for a time the whole Christian world sought to force Providence in this matter. You have read of the wonderful crusades; no less than eight of them, from 1095 to 1272; the time was not yet, but it will come.

II. Let us remember there is a God—a God who has a purpose and design both for His people and this land of Palestine. Hear Him speak: "The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is Mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me" (Lev. xxv. 23).

1. Men write, talk, and speculate, but *they leave out the Divine quantity in their calculations.* It is this that has confused the nations and the press. The science of algebra has been passed by, or this quantity could have been found. There is in nature a force, or something, which science names Catalysis. It is the name for the presence of some force or power that acts on other things, rendering precision in the chemical laboratory many times impossible. How much this catalytic power is in any compound or combination it is difficult to tell. It is a Divine quantity. It is present in the analysis, but not in the synthesis. The physiologist meets it everywhere, but the anatomist nowhere. Science can pull to pieces, but cannot put things together the same, for this catalytic power escapes.

2. Nations, kings, rulers, and governments *forget that the earth is the Lord's.* They think they can part it as they like, but they cannot. This Divine force or quantity enters and vitiates their conclusion. Listen to Jehovah: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father and he will show thee; thy elders and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut. xxii. 7, 8; comp. also Isa. xliv. 7, and Acts xvii. 26).

III. But when will Israel and Judah return, and how? That they have to return some time, surely all will agree. The time of the end we believe to be near—

1st. By the general expectation.

2d. By the grand revelations and teaching of the Great Pyramid, this pillar and witness spoken of by Isaiah xix. 19. In this remarkable structure the year 1882 is very significantly denoted. Many great facts in Israel's history have been incorporated in this building and have come to pass; so for Israel something is in reserve for 1882—perhaps it is the great deliverance spoken of in the text. This year is also the wonderful prophetic year. The "time and times and dividing of time" makes 1260 years, which, added to the first year of Mahomet, is equal to our 622, which added makes 1882.

3d. By the Church witness. For the Gospel was to be preached as a witness unto all nations before Israel are gathered. This sign is now complete. But how will this great deliverance be brought about—in God's own way, as from the Egyptians? The overthrow and destruction of Turkey may be the preparatory cause. The Jews now feel specially moved, for at their late council in New York they had letters missive from Berlin, Paris, London, on how best to promote the return of those Jews who desire to return to Palestine.—*Joseph Wild, D.D., Brooklyn,* A.D. 1878.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XXIII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. NEGLIGENT PASTORS.

"Probably many who are called Gospel ministers are more chargeable with concealing truths than affirming direct error; with not properly building the house than wilfully pulling it down."—*Dr. Witherspoon.*

"Unfaithfulness is to undo our own souls as well as our people's."—*Bridges.*

"But the unfaithful priest, what tongue
Enough shall execrate! . . . .
By solemn, awful ceremony, he
Was set apart to speak the truth entire,
By action and by word; and round him stood
The people, from his lips expecting knowledge.
. . . . . .
They stood, for he had sworn, in face of God
And man, to deal sincerely with their souls;
To preach the Gospel for the Gospel's sake.
. . . . . .
Most guilty, villainous, dishonest man!
Wolf in the clothing of the gentle lamb!
Dark traitor in Messiah's holy camp!
Leper in saintly garb! assassin masked
In virtue's robe! Vile hypocrite, accursed!
I strive in vain to set his evil forth."
—*Pollock.*

Ver. 23. GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.

During the American war a British officer, walking out at sunrising, observed an old man with his arm upraised as if in adoration. The officer interfered with rude disregard, and demanded what he was about. The old native replied, "I am worshipping the Great Spirit." The officer asked derisively, "Where is He?" To which taunt the old man replied, "Soldier, *where is He not?*"

The question was once asked of a little boy, "How many gods are there?" "One," he replied. "How do you know there is only one?" He answered, "Because there is no room for any more; for the One God fills heaven and earth."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES. *Vide* previous chapter. *Cf.* 2 Kings xxiv. 10–12.

Natural History. "*Baskets of Figs:*" Vide *Natural History* notes on chaps. v. 17, viii. 13. The "*first ripe*" figs (ver. 2), called here *bikkurah* (*cf.* Isa. xxviii. 4; Mic. vii. 1; Hos. ix. 10), denotes the early or spring fig; and is still called *boccore* in Mauritania, and in Spanish *albacora*. The usual time for gathering figs is August; the *early fig* gathered in June is a rarity and delicacy. It is easily shaken off the tree (Nahum iii. 12). The "*very bad figs*" (ver. 2) were probably *sycamore* figs; which, unless punctured as they ripen, turn acrid, and "cannot be eaten" (ver. 3); or, they may have been decayed figs. "*Baskets of figs*" used to be offered as firstfruits in the Temple.

HOMILETIC SUMMARY OF CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BASKETS OF FIGS: A PARABLE AND A PROPHECY.

Notes:—i. *Those who are amid calamity do not necessarily deserve worse* than those who temporarily escape.

ii. *Those who temporarily escape calamity* may be destined to far heavier chastisements.

iii. Among those whom *disaster overtakes* there may be *eminently good men.* Daniel and Ezekiel were among the first captives!

iv. *Self-elation over immunity from adversity* will only invoke more humbling providences. Probably those who remained behind thought themselves better than those who had gone into captivity; but heavier judgments came in due time upon these boasters.

v. *Adversities may have a beneficent design and beneficent influence* (vers. 5–8).

I. A nation rent asunder—yet arrayed beneath God's eye.

1. *Separated by ordinance of God's providence.* God had permitted the captivity; and He had reserved the part which remained behind.

(*a.*) *In respect of location* they were widely separated. Babylon lay far off from Jerusalem.

(*b.*) *In respect of outward advantages* they were widely dissimilar. Exiles and residents. Yet both were equally

2. *Present under the eye of God's omniscience.* One part was captive in Babylon (ver. 1); the other part remained in Canaan (ver. 8); but both baskets of figs were "*set before* the Temple of the Lord." [The word נָתַן implies that they were *appointed* to this place before God's Temple.] Thus the exiles in Babylon were equally present to God's eye as those at Jerusalem. *Equally* under His eye: *those afar as those near; those amid adversity as those amid advantages.*

(*a.*) *Wherever we are we dwell under the Divine notice.* We cannot go beyond His ken. None are forgotten by God. Those "afar off" were still "set before" Him.

(*b.*) *Amid our adversities we do not lose the Divine Fatherhood.* Even though "sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans" (ver. 4), yet God declares,

"I will *acknowledge them*;" and "I will set Mine eyes upon them for good" (ver. 5).

II. A suggestive comparison—indicating vast moral dissimilarities. Two baskets of figs: in the one were "very good figs;" in the other "very naughty figs"—"the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil."

1. *Their experiences seemed to reverse this estimate.* It surprises us to find that those carried away captive were accounted "good," while those escaping the miseries of exile are pronounced "very bad." Here is teaching that we *judge not character by circumstances;* that we do not deem those who most suffer to be the greatest sinners. "Judge not according to the outward appearance;" "judge nothing before the time;" "I have seen *the wicked* in great power," &c. The facts were that the *exiles* were the *noblest and best of the nation;* those left at home were the refuse.

2. *Their separation was for a providential purpose.* Those of the nation who were of any worth at all were called out and sent away into safe keeping, even though into exile. And there they were in good keeping. Although it seemed worse to be in captivity than to dwell at home, they were really better off in Chaldea. Their removal to Babylon saved them from the calamities which befel the rest of the nation. "Whom God loveth He chasteneth."

3. *Their distinctive qualities was emphatically marked.* "Very good—very bad." Doubtless those who remained at home *flattered themselves with being better* than those who were exiled, and more pleasing to God than those who suffered captivity. They showed themselves "*very bad*" by their *pride of heart*, by *not profiting from the salutary warning* of the calamity which had come upon their fellow-countrymen, by *not repenting of their own evils and amending their ungodly lives.* The exiles showed themselves "*good*" by signs of *regeneration* under the discipline of captivity. God Himself esteemed them more favourably (ver. 5), and saw in them *higher excellences* and *more hopeful qualities* than the rest possessed. "God looketh not on the outward appearance, but at the heart."

III. A contrasted destiny—according with their merit and conduct. The good figs were a *delicacy* (see *Natural History* note supra); the bad were *obnoxious*—"could not be eaten." There was a reverse destiny for them. God gave this vision and prophecy to Jeremiah: (*a*) *To cheer the disconsolate captives with a hope of future good;* (*b*) *To check the vaunting of the heartless residents by menaces of their impending doom.*

1. *The gracious destiny of the exiles.* (1.) They should be carefully preserved (ver. 5). (2.) They were favourably regarded, and would be "acknowledged" by God (ver. 4). (3.) Their banishment was for their good (ver. 5). (4.) Their miraculous rescue was pledged them (ver. 6). (5.) Spiritual regeneration should crown all other and temporal benefits (ver. 7). Thus "*God will devise means whereby His banished ones shall return unto Him.*"

2. *The hopeless desolation of the disobedient.* They had refused to act on God's counsel (chap. xvi. 8, 9); and now boasted of their prudence in remaining in the city; probably, too, they talked scornfully of the captives. But these people should (1.) Be driven asunder over the earth (ver. 9); whereas the Babylonish captives were altogether in one scene; companions and confederated. (2.) Their calamities would work ill to them—not regenerating them, as the others, but hardening and alienating them the more (ver. 9). (3.) They would be subjected to contempt and ridicule (ver. 9). (4.) No hope or possibility of restoration would be granted them (ver. 10). Whereas their exiled fellow-countrymen were being preserved for better times, they were but reserved for greater woes. Neither those who were carried into Egypt with Jehoahaz (ver. 8), nor those who should flee thither, would share in the blessings promised to the Chaldean exiles. "According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay" (Isa. lix. 19). God's administrations

of *chastisement* or *punishment* are regulated by what He discerns are our dispositions and possibilities.

See *Addenda:* CHASTENED, YET NOT ABANDONED.

Lange supplies the following homiletic summary of the chapter:—

GOOD AND BAD FIGS—EMBLEMS OF HUMANITY.

Humanity in its twofold aspect: *well-pleasing* or *displeasing* to God.

I. The prisoners and broken-hearted are, like the good figs, well-pleasing to God. For (1) They know the Lord, and turn to Him; (2) He is their God, and they are His people.

II. Those who dwell proudly and securely are, like the bad figs, displeasing to God. For (1) They live on in foolish blindness; (2) They challenge the judgment of God.

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* DELICIOUS AND REPULSIVE FRUIT. "*One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.*"

See *Natural History* note above, on the varieties of figs and their ripening periods.

Analogy: Men show *varieties* in temperament and character, more remarkable than the varieties among figs, and more numerous. And among men the *ripening* matures at different periods: some being *early* ripe—children and youth; others reaching maturity only *in the autumn years* of life; others only in *the winter of age*. But the differences among men may be summed up thus: *good* and *bad*. Two classes only. Gradations there are in each class, but the absolute qualities are only two.

I. Growth under common conditions. These figs were all Palestine figs.

1. *Their original stock was the same.* All were "*figs;*" and grew on trees which were identical in genus. So all men, whatever their nationality or individuality or parentage, spring from the one stock—*humanity;* and humanity *invested with its qualities and possibilities by God.*

2. *Their advantages were the same.* The same *soil*—Canaan; under *same fructifying influences* — religious influences, Divine teachings, prophetic counsels and warnings, &c., *guarded by the same care*—God watched over both: He the Gardener.

II. Maturing under gracious influences. Both the "good" and "bad" reached maturity and ripeness. They could not resist these influences working that result.

1. Maturing influences which *compelled development.* Probably people dislike their true character being *forced* to decision and fruition; they would rather remain neutral. But *the "figs"* could not escape nor resist the action of earth, air, and sun. *This Jewish nation* could not escape nor resist the influences of prophetic teaching and providential discipline. On the two sections of the people there had acted developing influences: *exile* had benefited the captives; whereas *exemption from captivity* had hardened those who remained in Judah. So *on all men* providence, religion, grace, and God's Spirit are acting; compelling the development and manifestation of their temper and character.

2. Maturing influences which *tested their true nature.* The figs ripened into "good figs" and "naughty figs." The maturing processes do not *change* the nature of the thing fructified, but only bring it to complete development. So Jeremiah's prophecies and God's providential dealings *did not make them "good" or "naughty,"* but tested their tendency. Thus life's incidents and Gospel preaching *test us:* prove our spirit; try the state and inclinations of our hearts.

III. Resulting in the completest contrast. "*Very good* figs, even the figs first ripe"—*a delicious fruit*; "*very naughty* figs, which could not be eaten, so bad"—*rotten or repulsive* fruit.

1. *Wholly dissimilar in quality and character.* The *exiles* became humble, repentant, reformed. The *resident Jews* became insolent, self-secure, defiant. The former became a *delicacy* "as the first ripe figs;" the latter *obnoxious*, "could not be eaten." "*Good*" and "*bad*." What is our moral quality or spiritual character? Godly or ungodly; sacred or sinful; with Christ or against Him; redeemed or reprobate?

2. *God dealt with them according to their state.* Not according to their *name;* both fruits were "figs;" and both sections of the nation were "Jews." But according to their *nature* and quality: "good" or "naughty." The "good"—God "will acknowledge" (ver. 5), and make better (ver. 7). The "bad"—He would reject (ver. 9) and destroy (ver. 10). The exiles became ripe for God's mercy; the residents became rotten and repulsive—fit for nothing but rejection.

Ver. 7. *Theme:* KNOWING GOD WITH THE HEART. "*And I will give them an heart to know Me.*"

God has often kind and gracious purposes towards men when they least imagine it. "Truly God is good to Israel." We are very imperfect judges of the character and design of Divine dispensations. "No man knoweth good or evil from all that is before him." The good figs, meaning the best and most spiritual part of the nation, were sent to Babylon for their good; and the bad figs, the most corrupt among the Jews, were kept in Jerusalem that they might ripen to ruin. Those who remained in Jerusalem no doubt thought that they were special objects of Divine favour, and that they who were sent first to Babylon were the objects of God's displeasure: but the reverse was the fact. This may teach us not to be rash and hasty in our conclusions; not to judge before the time; and not to convert calamities into judgments (Luke xiii. 1–5).

I. The eminent blessing promised—a heart to know and love God.

i. *It is inestimably precious*—"to know Him"—know Him as their God. All knowledge is valuable; but Divine knowledge supremely so. By this is meant not a speculative knowledge, which the devils have in greater perfection than ourselves, and remain devils still; but a spiritual, experimental, and soul-satisfying knowledge of God. It includes a knowledge of Him in His revealed character, in His condescending grace, in His covenant relations, in His providential government, and in the special communion with the souls of His redeemed children. "*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious*"—gracious in making His promises; faithful in fulfilling them. God known in the heart is, in effect, to have *the Bible opened*, the *Law* opened, the *Gospel* opened, *Christ* opened, *heaven* opened, the *covenant of grace* opened, and the blessings and immunities of the spiritual life laid opened and revealed. But without this—without Christ and the knowledge and love of God shed abroad in the heart, our religion is a mere name—like a *husk* without the kernel, like a *casket* without the jewel, like a body without the informing spirit.

ii. *It is God's special gift.* "I will give." He *claims* it; He only is *competent;* He *delights* to give it. This is not a natural attainment, but a Divine communication and bestowment. All knowledge is essentially from God, for He teacheth the husbandman discretion, and taught *Aholiab and Bezaleel* how to accomplish the carved work for the tabernacle—but this spiritual knowledge is pre-eminently from Him.

iii. This is often *a gradual attainment:* begun in conversion, carried on in the successive developments of the Christian life. He who impresses Divine truths upon the mind, at first, in conversion, opens them more fully afterwards—shows their importance, harmony, consistency, and power; removes doubts and jealousies and suspicions concerning them, and renders them vitally influential upon the soul. "*Then shall we know, if we follow on to know, His going forth is prepared as the morning.*"

One beam of light breaking in from

the Spirit of God does more towards confirming and establishing the mind in the truths of religion, than a thousand arguments of the most subtle disputers, or a thousand sermons of the most eloquent preachers. Hence we read of "*the demonstration of the Spirit.*"

iv. *It is greatly facilitated by sanctified afflictions.* The good figs must be removed to Babylon, to attain a higher knowledge of God, and a greater ripeness of grace. *The school of the Cross is the school of light.* In captivity it is given them. Afflictions were the means of it.

II. The means of its attainment.

i. *Plead the promise* in prayer. Oh, how much need have we to wait and pray for its accomplishment in our own experience! Some are weak in knowledge; slow in capacity, like the disciples, who, though they had so good a Master, were but dull scholars. "Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." Like the Hebrews, chap. v. 12. "We must open our mouth to God in prayer, that He may open our eyes. "*Open Thou mine eyes.*" "*Lord, that I may receive my sight.*" "*Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*"

ii. *Honour the methods of Divine instruction:* ordinances, providences.

iii. *Walk by the light of the truth you know.* If you have any saving and spiritual knowledge, be thankful, be humble. Do not abuse the light, but improve it. Live under the power of the truth as it is in Jesus. Resign yourself to its transforming power. Give this knowledge room to work, that it may have free course and be glorified in you.

iv. *Guard against all the obstructions to this knowledge:* against sloth, against worldliness, against easily-besetting sins. "Ye did run well, who hath hindered you?" Some men know much, but to little purpose. Their hearts are too strong for their light. This makes them more skilful hypocrites. These make rents and divisions in the Church. They employ the light they have to do the devil's work.

III. The uses to which this knowledge is subservient.

i. *To our happiness:* free from doubt.

ii. *To our holiness:* alienate us from the world and evil.

iii. *To our usefulness:* makes us bold for God, a centre of light; emboldens us to act and suffer.—*Samuel Thodey.* A.D. 1856.

See *Addenda:* CHASTENED, YET NOT ABANDONED.

Theme: AN ENLIGHTENED HEART IS GOD'S GIFT.

"Since He affirms that He would *give* them *a heart* to understand, we hence learn—

i. *That men are by nature blind;* and also that, when they are blinded by the devil, they cannot return to the right way.

ii. That men cannot be otherwise capable of light than *by having God to illuminate them* by His Spirit.

This passage also shows—

iii. *That until the sinner bows before God's tribunal* and owns Him to be the Judge, he will never be touched with the feeling of true repentance."—*Calvin.*

Comments—

"He who willingly and readily resigns himself to the will of God [as the exiles did] even to the cross, may escape misfortunes. But he who opposes himself to the hand of God [as the residents in Jerusalem], cannot escape."—*Cramer.*

"The captives are dearest to God. By the first greater affliction He prepares their souls for repentance and radical conversion, so that He has in them again His people and inheritance. Oh the gracious God, that He allows those who *on account of sin* must be so deeply degraded and rendered slaves, even *in such humiliation, to be His people!* The captives are forgiven their opposition to God. . . . God will show them what His love can do; they shall return, and in true nearness to God be His true Israel."—*Diedrich.*

NOTICEABLE TOPICS IN CHAPTER XXIV.

Topic: JEREMIAH'S VISION OF FIGS. Reflections on some of the characteristics of the age we live in. (Vers. 1–3.)

It is not difficult to see the force and application of this homely but sententious little allegory. Jeremiah lived in those days of declension and disaster in which the threatened invasion of Judea by the king of Babylon actually took place. Those who were "carried away" comprised the best of the population with regard to intelligence, religious feeling, and patriotism. Their sorrows and afflictions humbled them, so that they repented of their idolatries and obtained mercy of the Lord. They also found favour with their conquerors, and not a few of them rose to high and influential positions in the court and kingdom of Babylon. The Jews who remained at home with Zedekiah "and his princes" revolted against God more and more. Their heart was proud and unhumbled. Year after year they sunk deeper into misery, profanity, and vice. They not only provoked the Divine anger increasingly, but awakened the fierce disdain and hatred of their Chaldean masters, so that at length they were so wasted and ravaged by pestilence, battle, poverty, and exile as to be utterly consumed from off the land which God had given to them and to their fathers (see vers. 8–13). These were the evil figs, so evil that they could not be eaten. The figs ought to have been good, but were not. All the figs were figs of the same season—say an unusually hot and dry one—suiting the trees in certain localities pre-eminently well, whereas in other localities the trees were blighted and withered, and the figs which grew upon them, dry, dusty, tasteless, and worm-eaten.

We are thus led to think of A SEASON FOR FRUIT, PECULIARLY INTENSE AND ARDENT, causing it to come to pass that *good* fruit turns out *remarkably* good, and *bad* fruit *remarkably* bad. The point suggested by Jeremiah's vision is, *That there occur periods or special circumstances in the religious life of nations, which tend to develop and force the maturation of character with unusual energy and astonishing rapidity.* In such times you do not find people merely good or bad, but the good are very good, and the evil very evil. Such a crisis it was with the Jews at the time when Jeremiah prophesied.

We live, at present, in a kind of *hothouse* atmosphere, which has the effect of *rapidly developing*, as well as *mightily intensifying*, all the moral and religious elements which go to constitute personal character. Must not the good be *very good*, and the evil *very evil?*

Suggest some of the circumstances and influences which invest the times we live in with this interesting peculiarity, and point out a few of the instances and illustrations of the effect thereby produced.

I. Certain peculiarities of our times and position may be noted.

1. This is an age of *extraordinary intellectual and social activity.* It is an age of many books and much reading; of fearless inquiry and frequent discovery, &c. It requires a great effort to keep the mind calm, to allay the frenzy of excited feeling, to check the extravagances of new-found liberty, and hold fast to the sober requirements of sound principle and acknowledged truth.

2. Another thing to be noticed is the *very full and clear religious light which we enjoy.* Compare it with any period since the Apostolic age; the Bible was never more closely and deeply studied than now; never were its great cardinal doctrines so fully established or so generally acknowledged among all sections of the Church; the Gospel was never preached to so many nations as now, and at no period were there in Great Britain so many preachers of evangelical truth as now. It would seem well-nigh impossible for any man to remain in ignorance of the things of God, the claims of Jesus, and the way of salvation.

3. There is also a corresponding *increase of activity in the Church.* Certainly no

age has ever surpassed our own in visible earnestness, in pecuniary liberality, or in the excitement and emulation of real Christian work.

What do all these things necessitate on our part individually? Truly potent and stimulating agencies are in operation, calculated to arouse us to repentance and godly solicitude, and then to prompt and goad us on to vigorous Christian life and action. What bold, what firm, what fruitful Christians we must become if we enter fully into "the spirit of the times," considered as engaged on the side of Christ and His Gospel! But if we refuse to do so, if we set ourselves to resist these powerful influences, how strenuous must that resistance be! how determined and resolute and how self-conscious that action of the will which still fights against God and clings to worldliness and sin! It seems impossible for us to be half-hearted, undecided, only negatively good or bad. Truly we must take sides openly, one way or the other. We cannot stand neutral: we must declare ourselves boldly and actively either for Christ or against Him. Behold the two baskets of figs; the good figs must be very good, and the evil figs very evil.

II. Facts are in harmony with these reasonings. Illustrations abound on every side. In this earnest age you find *earnest men* both for good and evil.

1. Was ever *war* conducted on so fearful a scale as we have lately witnessed it?

2. In our day, we have also seen such specimens of *commercial roguery and robbery*, conceived on so magnificent a scale, and executed under so clever and admirable a cloak of hypocrisy, as no previous age has ever presented to the world. Never, assuredly, in any land—Sodom and Gomorrah unexcepted—have baser things been done than have been discovered in our land, and in our own time.

3. On the other hand, look at the men who stand foremost in the van of *religious and philanthropy*. These are God's heroes; worthy of comparison with the spiritual heroes of ancient times, in regard to all that is noble in faith, self-denying in zeal, munificent in giving, or abundant in labours. These are among the good figs, which by God's grace are very good: and to the production of such instances of exalted and matured piety the present times are not in the least unfavourable.

4. One might speak of *books* as well as men. We defy any age to show such noble and masterly treatises as are now written by men of sanctified learning and genius, either in exposition of the Scriptures, or in vindication of their contents. Here again the good figs are very good, even as the evil figs are very evil.

5. Then there are *public institutions and societies to be looked at.* There are all manner of good institutions set on foot, it is true, but so are there, also, all manner of evil institutions established and seen to be flourishing. The kingdom of Satan is as active and roused up to new exertions as is the kingdom of Christ. Enormous sums of money are spent in the cause of religion; but far, far greater sums are forthcoming to support folly and wickedness, to build temples of mammon-worship and of pleasure, and to uphold the reign of sensuality and impiety.

III. One or two practical lessons ask our attention. We live in stirring times, in which the forces, both of good and evil, like the arts of material warfare, are developing unprecedented resources, and putting forth unheard-of and most gigantic energies; times in which prodigies abound, both of wickedness and of goodness; times in which the "good" figs are very good, and the "naughty" figs very bad. It is no small matter to live in England in this nineteenth century. A hotter, more crowded, or more excited moral battle-field was never known in the history of the world. Therefore—

1. *Let no man's trumpet give an uncertain sound;* nor let any one think that he can remain a neutral or uninterested spectator of the conflict. What a heavy responsibility rests upon those who live in such a century as this! The religious and moral influences which bear upon *us* are mighty beyond all that has gone before us.

2. *This is no time for trifling.* Let us seek to be good, and do good and then, behold what glorious possibilities belong to us of being *pre-eminently* holy, blest,

and useful! Ought we not to seek this higher growth in grace? Should we not desire to be, among the lowly, the most humble; among the spotless, the most pure; among the active, the most toilsome; among the meek, the most patient; and among the kind, the most charitable? Let us be "instant" in prayer; and, like Abraham, "strong in faith, giving glory to God." Surely this is a worthy and noble ambition; not merely to be a Christian, but *a Christian of the highest order.*

3. *Each may do great things for God.* His talent may be small; but how much may he make of it! What means of knowledge, what incentives to zeal, what facilities for usefulness are within every one's reach! None need be idle or half employed. Now, if ever, may the "good figs" be "very good," even as the "naughty figs" are very "bad." Now, if ever, does the saying of Zechariah apply to God's Church: "And he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." Let us never forget that he who would have God on his side, must take care himself to be always on the side of God.—*Rev. T. G. Horton* (Wolverhampton), in "*Christian World Pulpit*" (*summarised*).

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XXIV.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 1. CHASTENED, BUT NOT ABANDONED.

Three facts should be here noted:—

The exiles were *remembered* by God, as this vision shows. Also, they were *graciously esteemed* by Him—better figs than those who remained at home. Further, God *intended good* to them. So that when we seem outcast from happiness and hope, God may be only chastening us for our profit, or keeping us away from besotting "prosperity" (chap. xxii. 21), in order that we may be prepared for spiritual elevation (chap. xxiv. 7).

"After the storm, a calm;
After the bruise, a balm;
For the ill brings good in the Lord's own time,
And the sigh becomes a psalm.

"After the drought, the dew;
After the cloud, the blue;
For the sky will smile in the sun's good time,
And the earth grow glad and new."
—*Mrs. Crawford.*

Trapp remarks that "Jeconiah was a wicked prince, and therefore written childless. Howbeit, because by the advice of the prophet Jeremiah he submitted to Nebuchadnezzar, he and his company are here *comforted*, and *pronounced more happy*, however it might seem otherwise, than those that continued still in the land; and this, say the Hebrews (Rabar, Hugo, Lyra), was not obscurely set forth also by those two baskets of figs, whereof that which was worst showed best, and the other showed worst till they came to be tasted."

"Winter brings blessings, so the chill
Of dark adversity;—from its cold grasp
The soul revives reanimate,—more strong,
And better armed."—*F. A. Mackay.*

Winter will kill vermin which the summer of success and comfort is apt to produce and nourish.

"Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which, in prosperous circumstances, would have lain dormant."—*Horace.*

"All-pitying Heaven,
Severe in mercy, chastening in its love,
Oft-times in dark and awful visitation
Doth interpose, and leads the wanderer back
To the straight path, to be for ever after
A firm, undaunted, onward-bearing traveller,
Strong in humility, who swerves no more."
—*Joanna Baillie.*

(Comp. *Addenda* to chap. xxii., PROSPERITY.)

"I have read of a fountain that at noonday is cold, and at midnight it grows warm. So many a precious soul is cold Godward and Heavenward in prosperity, and grows warm in the midnight of adversity."—*Brooks.*

Ver. 7. "THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."

"This falling out of lovers shall but be a renewing of love betwixt us. God must sometimes whip His people to duty, and gather them from evil, as well as entice them."—*Trapp.*

CHAPTER XXV.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter: "*Fourth year of Jehoiakim*" (ver. 1). It is stated the *third* year in Dan. i. 1; but Hales ("Sacred Chron."; shows that Jehoiakim was made king by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt in July B.C. 607; whereas Nebuchadnezzar mounted the throne January 21, B.C. 604: and thus Nebuchadnezzar's *first* year included parts of both the *third* and *fourth* of Jehoiakim. In the Chaldean cylinders [placing all chronology back by twenty-two years] these dates are B.C. 590 for Jehoiakim's accession, and B.C. 586 for Nebuchadnezzar's. *Cf.* notes *in loc.* to chapters vii. and x. This chapter formed part of Jehoiakim's roll (*cf.* chap. xxxvi. 29).

2. Contemporary Scriptures.—Dan. i.; Jer. xxxvi.; 2 Kings xxiv. 1, 2; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 5–7.

3. National Affairs.—*Cf.* notes *in loc.* to chapters vii. and x. This date formed a momentous crisis in the history of the kingdom of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar, having defeated Pharaoh Necho at Charchemish, came, in pursuit of the Egyptian fugitives, to Judah; took Jerusalem, made Jehoiakim vassal-king, and carried the best life of the nation away into Babylon—thus beginning the seventy years' Babylonian captivity, which Jeremiah in verse 11 foretells. For twenty-three years Jeremiah had now been God's prophet in Judah, calling his nation to repentance and reformation. Jeremiah was, during this "fourth year of Jehoiakim," amid his most energetic labours, persuading Jehoiakim from reliance upon Egypt, and counselling, both as a matter of policy and of religious duty, allegiance with Babylon. This incensed the king against Jeremiah, and led him angrily to burn the roll.

4. Contemporaneous History.—Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, being old and decrepit, entrusted to his son, Nebuchadnezzar, the war against Pharaoh Necho, who had penetrated to the very Euphrates in lust of empire. He won supremacy over his Egyptian rival by a victorious and decisive war at Charchemish. *Cf.* notes *in loc.*, chapters vii. and x. "*The mingled people:*" Ionian and Carian settlers in Egypt, to whom Psammetichus had given territory.

5. Geographical References.—Ver. 20. "*Uz:*" lying between Egypt and the states of the Mediterranean, north of Arabia-Petræa, between the sea and Idumea. (*Not* the Uz of Job i. 1.) In this geographical survey, after reference to *Pharaoh of Egypt*, first we have mentioned "the races of Arabia and Philistia that bordered on Egypt to the east and west (ver. 20); then the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites to the east (ver. 21); the Phœniciana, with their colonies, to the west (ver. 22); next the Arabian tribes of the desert, extending eastward from Palestine to the Euphrates (vers. 23, 24); then the Elamites and Medes in the distant east (ver. 25); the near and distant kings of the North; and last of all the king of Babylon (ver. 26)."—*Kiel.* Ver. 20. "*Azzah:*" *i.e.*, Gaza. "*The remnant of Ashdod:*" this is one of those pregnant sentences which none but a contemporary writer could have used. Psammetichus, after a siege of twenty-nine years, had captured and destroyed Ashdod, excepting only a feeble remnant (Herod. ii. 157).—*Payne Smith.* [*Gath* is not mentioned, for it was destroyed in the same war.] Ver. 22. "*The isles:*" properly the *coastland* (sing.), or the maritime regions of the Mediterranean, where the Phœnicians had planted colonies. Ver. 23. "*Dedan:*" North Arabia (Gen. xxv. 3, 4). "*Tema and Bus:*" tribes north of Arabia (Job xxxii. 2). "*All that are in the utmost corners:*" see note on chapter ix. 26. The tribe of Kedar. Ver. 24. "*Mingled people that dwell in the desert:*" tribes of Cushite origin, such as Kenites. By intermarriage these tribes had become of mixed blood. Ver. 25. "*Zimri:*" unmentioned elsewhere. *Zimran* was the eldest son of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. xxv. 2). This was probably a district east of the Arabian desert towards Persia. Ptolemy mentions a *Zabra* between Mecca and Medina. "*Elam:*" west of Persia, but used in Scripture for Persia generally. Ver. 26. "*Sheshach*" (*cf.* chap. li. 41), Babylon. See *Lit. Crit.* on word below.

6. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 1. "*Jehoiakim and Josiah:*" see notes on chapter i. "*Nebuchadrezzar:*" notes on chapter xxi. 2. Ver. 3. "*Amon king of Judah:*" son of Manasseh, fifteenth king of Judah, and father of Josiah. For his character see Zeph. i. 4; iii. 3, 4, 11.

7. Natural History.—Ver. 34. "*Principal of the flock*" (also in ver. 35): means the best and fattest of the sheep. Ver. 38. "*Forsaken his covert as the lion:*" *i.e.*, ventures forth in quest of prey.

8. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 10. "*Voice of mirth, and of the bride:*" *cf.* notes *in loc.* on chapter vii. 34, xvi. 9 "*Sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle:*" *i.e.*, the day's industries, and the evening social fellowships after the day's toils are over. See *Addenda* on ver. 10. Ver. 15. "*Take the wine-cup:*" the metaphor of an intoxicating cup is commonly used in Scripture to denote affliction or misery. *Cf.* Isa. li. 17–22; Jer. xlix. 12; li. 7; Lam. iv. 21, &c. Ver. 30. "*Give a shout, as they that tread the grapes:*" as the vintagers trampled the grapes they raised a loud song or cry.

9. Literary Criticisms.—General remark: the text of this chapter is disfigured by numerous interpolations, some of which are absent from the Septuagint. Thus, from ver. 9 disappear the words, "*saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, My servant.*" In ver. 11, instead of "*shall serve the king of Babylon,*" the Septuagint reads, "serve among the nations."

From ver. 12 are omitted the words, "*the king of Babylon*" and "*and the land of the Chaldeans.*" From ver. 13 are omitted the gloss "*which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.*" In ver. 26, "*and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them*" are left out in the Septuagint. All these interpolations were doubtless inserted by a copyist from the later prophecies of Jeremiah, chapters l. and li.

Ver. 26. "*Sheshach:*" this is a cypher form of the word Babylon, and is done thus:—The alphabet letters are reversed in order, and instead of the proper letter of the word being used, its number from the *beginning* of the alphabet is counted, and then the same number-letter reckoned *from the end* of the alphabet is inserted in its place. Thus, ב is the *second* letter from the beginning; so ש is the *second* letter from the end of the alphabet; and ל is the *twelfth* from the beginning, while ך is the *twelfth* from the end. Babylon is in Hebrew, BABEL; but, instead, the letters are altered into SHESHACH. This is the Cabalistic system. *Michaelis*, however, explains the term as meaning "*brazen-gated*" (*cf.* Isa. xlv. 2); others suggest "*house of a prince;*" *Glassius* argues that it comes from the Babylonian goddess *Sach*, by reduplication of the first letter. From this goddess Misael's name was altered to Me-*shach*. Further, the term *Shace* was applied to a Babylonish festival alluded to in chap. li. 39, 57; Isa. xxi. 5. It was *during this feast* that Cyrus took Babylon (Herod. i.). Thus Jeremiah mystically denoted the time of its capture by this term.

Ver. 30. "Mightily roar *upon his habitation.*" נָוֶה means both *habitation* and *pasture;* and the text better reads, "roar mightily *over his pasturage.*"

Ver. 37. "*Peaceable habitations.*" Here, as in ver. 30, habitation should be *pastures.*

HOMILETIC SURVEY OF CHAPTER XXV.

THE MANIFOLD JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

The chapter distributes itself into sections thus:—*Judah's captivity* (vers. 3–11); *Babylon's fall* (vers. 12–14); *The wine-cup of fury for the nations* (vers. 15–29); *Tribulations throughout the world* (vers. 30–38).

Glancing over the whole chapter, we are impressed with the theme of the Divine dispensations of judgment in relation to individuals, nations, and the whole world. *Lange* suggests the following: We can speak of—

I. The judicial acts of God according to the conditions of their manifestations. They are—

1. *Required by the sins of men* (vers. 5–6).
2. *Deferred by the love of God* (vers. 5–6).
3. *Driven to accomplishment by the impenitence of mankind* (ver. 7, *seq.*).

II. The judicial acts of God according to the stages of their manifestation.

1. This applies to *current preliminary judgments.* (1.) In the life of *individuals.* (2.) In the life of *nations.* God judges continually here below, both single individuals and entire nations (vers. 9–29).

2. *It applies to the final judgment.* (1.) In so far as it has *already begun* (vers. 9–11, 29; 1 Pet. iv. 17; Matt. xxiv.). The theocracy in its outer relations is already judged; in this sense the universal "judgment has begun at the house of God." (2.) In so far as it is *still future.* Single empires have already been destroyed, as well as single men; but the judgment of the *world* as a whole is still impending (vers. 30, *seq.*).

III. The judicial acts of God differently represented in the Old and New Testaments.

1. In the *Old Testament* they are—(1.) Represented in figures (vers. 30, 31, *seq.* 38). (2.) Limited to the earth (vers. 30, 33).

In the *New Testament* they are represented—(1.) In their full super-terrestrial reality. (2.) As extended over heaven and earth. (Comp., in contrast to this passage, Matt. xxv.; 1 Cor. xv.; 1 Thess. iv.; 2 Pet. iii.).

IV. The judicial acts of God differently felt according to the inward conditions of men.

1. As *destruction* on the part of *the godless* (ver. 7, *seq.*).
2. As *deliverance* on the part of *the pious* (vers. 11, 12).

TOPICAL SURVEY OF CHAPTER XXV. HOMILETICALLY ARRANGED.

Topic: PROPHETS AND THEIR MISSION. (Vers. 1–7, 13, 15, 30.)

"The word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And the Lord hath sent unto you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them" (vers. 3, 4).

This is the first place in the book where Jeremiah speaks of himself as "the prophet" (ver. 2). He here records the term of his labours (ver. 3), and alludes to the changes which had come upon his nation during his mission among them.

I. A survey of prophetic work.

1. His vast and manifold audience (ver. 2). 2. The lengthened period of his ministry (ver. 3). Nineteen years under Josiah, three months under Jehoahaz, four years under Jehoiakim.

II. A testimony to prophetic fervour.

1. His own persevering activity (ver. 2: "For three and twenty years, rising early and speaking"). 2. A succession of Divine messengers (ver. 3), so that the messages and expostulations of prophets were never silenced.

III. A statement of prophetic authority.

1. He prophesied only because commissioned by God. "The word of the Lord came," &c. (ver. 3). Comp. also verses 15 and 30. 2. The prophets were divinely constrained to their work and witness (ver. 4).

IV. A summary of prophetic teaching.

1. A call to reformation (ver. 5). 2. A promise of a goodly heritage (ver. 5). 3. A warning against impiety (ver. 6). 4. An exhibition of the consequences of sin: "do you hurt" (ver. 6); "provoke Me to anger" (ver. 7). 5. Predictions of judgment (vers. 15, 30).

V. An indication of the variety characterising prophetic labours.

1. Preaching (vers. 1–7). 2. Writing (ver. 13). 3. Visiting (ver. 15). 4. Denouncing (ver. 30).

VI. A protest against prophetic rejection.

1. The people had persistently refused to *hear* prophetic messages (vers. 3, 4, 8). 2. They had shown *no inclination* towards the messages God sent (ver. 4). Comp. *Addenda* on ver. 4: "*Jehovah hath sent to you all the prophets.*"

His had not been an easy ministry; comp. xv. 15–21; xx. 14–18. But he was now firmly established as a prophet, and had become "unto the people a fenced brazen wall" (comp. i. 18; vi. 27; xv. 20). But, alas! how little had his nation benefited! Repudiating such a messenger of God, and for so long, their sin was the greater, and their doom righteously severe.

Topic: NEBUCHADREZZAR, GOD'S SERVANT. (Ver. 9.)

The bestowment of this title by Jehovah is both rare and significant. It is given in the Old Testament Scriptures emphatically to *three persons:* first to *Moses* (Deut. xxxiv. 5; Josh. i. 2), as the Leader and Lawgiver of his people; to *Nebuchadrezzar* (Jer. xxv. 9; xxvii. 6; xliii. 10), as the Punisher, yet Preserver, of Judah; and to MESSIAH (Isa. lii. 13; liii. 11), as the Redeemer and King of Israel. Note: *Cyrus* is called by a similar name (Isa. xliv. 28 and xlv. 1), as the Liberator and Restorer of the exiled people. See *Addenda*, ver. 9: "*Nebuchadrezzar, My servant.*"

I. A discredited and astonishing appointment. Facts seemed to refute the idea that Nebuchadnezzar was to be commissioned and empowered to conquer the nations and possess the heritage of Israel. *Egypt* had been the Great Power. Pharaoh Necho it was who had slain Josiah, and had established his authority between Egypt and the Euphrates (2 Kings xxiv. 7). And now Nineveh was

captured by him, the Assyrian empire had fallen, and Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, was infirm and old. Jehoiakim, their own king, was a vassal of Pharaoh. All these facts seemed to declare that Egypt under Pharaoh, and not Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, was destined to be the supreme arbiter and ruler of nations.

But—1. *God purposed otherwise;* and "none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?"

2. *God was preparing another*, who was merely a young military leader, and was hitherto unknown—Nebuchadnezzar. "Things despised God hath chosen; and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." *That very year* in which Nabopolassar died, Nebuchadnezzar, his son, succeeded to the throne, and began a series of brilliant victories which raised him to the highest position among the potentates of the earth.

II. An unchallengeable temporary supremacy. To this person, whom God would "send for and take," should be given victory over Egyptian arms (at Charchemish), dominion over the mighty realm of Egypt, over the destinies of God's own people, and over all neighbouring nations. Verse 9 declares that (1) God will gather together all the northern nations; (2) place them under Nebuchadnezzar as sovereign and general; (3) bring them against Judah.

The period of this ascendancy is *definitely limited;* but it is equally *definitely determined;* nothing can prolong, nor can shorten it.

1. *God's omnipotence decides national and individual ascendancy.* "He raiseth up one, and putteth down another." Powerful nations are weak indeed in His *all*-powerful hands; while weakest forces can be made "mighty through God."

2. *God's omnipotence is thus to be honoured in human affairs.* Because Nebuchadnezzar failed to revere God's power as higher than his own, and indeed the source of his own, therefore he was degraded. (See Dan. iv. 22, 25, 29–37; also Dan. v. 18–23.)

III. A minister of God's righteous judgments (vers. 9, 11).

1. *Specially employed by Jehovah for punishing wrong.* Guilt in Judah and the nations had to be scourged, and God used him for this.

2. *Unconsciously employed by Jehovah for ends he did not appreciate.* Himself no worshipper of Jehovah, no willing "servant" of the Divine Master, he yet did God's behest effectually. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him;" "Men are Thy hand."

IV. A guardian of the covenant nation.

1. Judah was to be *chastised* for its idolatry, *yet preserved from destruction.* Captivity effected both ends.

2. Judah was to *fulfil Divine prophecies and vindicate God's faithfulness to His covenants* before the world. Prophecy had for ages threatened *captivity* as the penalty of idolatry; therefore it came. Yet prophecy had as emphatically guaranteed that God's people should be *restored to and repossess their land;* therefore their exile was made safe to them, and really preserved them intact as a nation, while it also disciplined their heart and prepared them for return to Canaan.

God has His own methods of effecting His plans; yet His plans cannot fail. By ways and agencies we should not select He works our "good" (chap. xxiv. 6). Over all the powers and projects of man He sways, and does according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth.

(*a.*) It is well to *be reconciled to so great a God.* (*b.*) We are *safe in the covenant care of so faithful a God.* (*c.*) It is *hopeless to resist the purposes of so omnipotent a God.*

Topic: SEVENTY YEARS' CAPTIVITY. (Vers. 11, 12.)

Rationalistic criticism is, of course, offended by this specification beforehand of the term of Babylon's ascendancy and of the Jewish captivity. The period "seventy years" must have been interpolated after the captivity was over and the time

known! says *Hitzig*. "Such coincidence of history with prophecy would be a *surprising accident*," says *Hitzig* again. *Graf* thinks that the prediction of Babylon's destruction, at the very time when it is described as a power divinely commissioned to execute judgment, is somewhat *unsuitable and improbable*.

To this the reply may be: 1. As the Babylonish ascendancy *began* with the year of this prophecy, the fourth of Jehoiakim's reign, this was a *suitable time for predicting the term of its continuance*. 2. As God's judgments on the nations were now being passed before the prophet's vision, beginning with Jerusalem and comprehending all the earth, *Babylon could not reasonably be omitted*. 3. Since the future of Judah in captivity was so bound up with the future of Babylon, the *prediction of the term of exile* was *naturally accompanied with this prediction of Babylon's fall*. 4. Inasmuch also as the Jewish captivity now began, it was needful—in order to save the exiles from despair, to encourage their submission to expatriation, to sustain their faith in God, and thus to keep alive a religious life in their souls—*to show beforehand the limit of the term of discipline*.

I. The historic reckoning of this period. These "seventy years" *began* with "the fourth year of Jehoiakim and the first of Nebuchadrezzar" (ver. 1), when he first captured Jerusalem, *i.e.*, B.C. 606. They *end* with the capture of Babylon in the first year of Cyrus, and the restoration of the Jews, B.C. 536 (Ezra i. 1). About the filling up of those years in Babylonish history there seems some slight difficulty. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-four years; his son Evil-Merodach, two years; Neriglissar, who murdered Evil-Merodach (the Nergal-Sharezer mentioned in chapter xxxix. 3–13), Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law, four years; his infant son, Laborosoarchad, nine months, he being then murdered; Nabonedus, seventeen years. To these sixty-seven years and nine months may, however, be added the necessary interval until the Jews were really in repossession of their country, which may fully account for the literal "seventy years."

II. The theocratic purpose of this captivity.

1. *The assignment of His people to captivity* was intended by God—(*a*) to *punish their apostasy from Him*; (*b*) to *restore their fidelity to Him*; (*c*) to *enlighten them concerning the true and only God*, in distinction from the revolting forms of idolatry and the consequent degradations they would witness in Babylon (chap. xxiv. 5–7).

2. The *limitation of the term of His people's captivity* was intended by God—(*a*) to declare that *the committal of Judah to Nebuchadnezzar was not an abdication of His claim to them and control over their destiny*; (*b*) to vindicate *His power over the mighty monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar*, *His* "*servant*," whom He had exalted to carry out the Divine plans; (*c*) to *foster the hope of restoration in the hearts of His people*, and thus *dispose them to accept the chastisement* and *renew their faith in Jehovah*. They would only "hang their harps on the willows," not cast them away in despair.

III. The supernatural termination of Babylon's power.

1. *The empire rose and ended within the predetermined period* of "seventy years." A short-lived wonder; and *apparently called into existence only for* the temporary *expatriation*, and therefore *preservation*, of Judah. Within the term of Judah's exile, Babylon rose and fell. Babylonia and the captivity were synchronous: commenced simultaneously, closed simultaneously. This suggests *the vast importance Judah assumed in God's esteem*. For *her* He created Babylon! Nebuchadnezzar was "His servant" to punish and preserve her.

2. The precision with which God limited Babylon's ascendancy sublimely vindicates *God's supremacy as the Governor* of nations. "The mighty monarchy of Chaldea was under the control of the God of Israel, and He who made it flow like a stormy ocean, and overwhelm the nations with its flood, could say to its proud waves, Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther."—*Wordsworth*.

3. *The predicted overthrow of Babylon* was a judgment by God upon the lust of empire. Although the Chaldeans were a Divine instrument for punishing the

Jews, they knew it not, but merely gratified their cruel passions and impious greed of power, thereby contracting guilt which in its turn called for punishment (ver. 12). Under Cyrus' command the allied Medes and Persians, after a long and difficult siege, captured Babylon, B.C. 538; and Darius the Mede assumed the throne. "The empire of Babylon," says Dr. Payne Smith, "was practically the work of one man. After Nebuchadnezzar's death it continued for a few years, during which its history is a series of murders and usurpations, and then it fell for ever, and its ruins form its only lasting memorial. Contrast with this the promise to Judah in chap. iv. 27."

Topic: PROPHECY VINDICATED IN BABYLON'S FALL. *"And I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it"* (ver. 13).

The fall of Babylon proves the truth of prophecy, and prophecy proved attests the Divine inspiration of prophets. Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted events which befell mighty empires; they must, therefore, have been moved by the Omniscient Spirit. Man himself "knoweth not what a day may bring forth;" how shall he foresee the fate of cities and destiny of nations, and at a time when nothing could indicate such events? Consider—

I. **God minutely declared His prophetic purpose against Babylon.** "My words which I have pronounced against it."

1. He pronounced the destruction of Babylon *by the Medes and Persians* (Isa. xxi. 2; Jer. li. 11). History fulfilled this; for under the command of Cyrus, who was announced a hundred years before he was born, Babylon was besieged by the united forces of the Medes and Persians.

2. God declared that *the river of Babylon should be dried up* (Isa. xliv. 27; Jer. i. 38). This river was two furlongs broad, and more than twelve feet deep; and was thought to be a surer fortification than the city's massive walls. Prophecy was strikingly fulfilled; for Cyrus turned the course of the Euphrates and drained the channel, so that his soldiers crossed and entered the city.

3. Further, Jehovah proclaimed that Babylon should *become a desolation*. So complete should this desolation be that the Arabian would not be able even to pitch his tent on the site (Isa. xiii. 20). All this came to pass. One part of the country was overflowed by the river which Cyrus diverted, making the land a boggy marsh, which became so overrun with serpents and venomous creatures that not even the wild Arab could dwell near it.

Comparing history with prophecy, in every minute particular God's "words which He pronounced against" Babylon are seen to be startlingly verified.

II. When God denounces a city or nation, **His decision is not arbitrary, but is justified by some foreseen fact.** He foresees Babylon's *idolatry*, *iniquity*, and impious *pride*, and therefore determined its destruction. Hence this overthrow was not the result of caprice or arbitrariness on God's part; but *sin was the cause* of Babylon's fall. Sin saps the foundation of cities and empires.

III. When, because of iniquity, **God determines the destruction** of a city or empire, **nothing can save it.** If ever a city appeared impregnable, it was Babylon. Its walls, says one writer, "were above 300 feet high, 87 feet broad, and 48 miles in compass." In addition, the river Euphrates appeared an insuperable barrier to an enemy entering the city. Yet, notwithstanding its mighty wall with its hundred gates of solid brass, notwithstanding its wide and deep river, Babylon was taken, according to the word of the Lord.

Men talk of *impregnability*—the impregnability of walls, forts, and bulwarks. But only what God defends is impregnable, and nothing can stand when God determines its fall. Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre and Sidon, all illustrate this—the power of God to fulfil His counsel. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?"

IV. The fidelity of God, in the execution of His threatened judgments, is presumptive proof that He will fulfil all His gracious promises. Hath He more delight in punishing the wicked than in blessing the righteous? Nay; He is "*slow* to anger," but He is also "*not slack* concerning His promises." Sure in the fulfilment of His threatenings, certainly "all His promises are Yea and Amen."

V. *Divine threatenings have in some cases been recalled*, but there are no instances where Divine promises have not been fulfilled. The sins which incurred the threatenings have been repented of, as with Nineveh, and so the stroke has been turned aside. But all God's promises spring from His grace and love. And, while *man's sin* may cease, and so the judgment be escaped, *God's* "*love* never faileth," therefore the promises can never be recalled. Promises may be delayed, but Divine love and faithfulness are guarantees that what He has promised He will assuredly perform.—*Arranged from Rev. D. Pledge's "Walks with Jeremiah."*

Topic: THE WINE-CUP OF WRATH. (Vers. 15–29.)

A bold image, and not infrequently used by the sacred writers (comp. Ps. lxxv. 8, Isa. li. 22, Lam. iv. 21, Rev. xvi. 19, &c.). *Dr. Adam Clarke* points out that *Plato* has a similar idea: "Suppose," says *Plato*, "God had given to men a medicating potion inducing fear, so that the more any one should drink of it, so much the more miserable he should find himself at every draught, and become fearful of everything both present and future; and, at last, though the most courageous of men, should become totally possessed by fear" (*De Leg.* i., near the end). *Homer* also (*Iliad* xxiv. 527–533) places two vessels at the disposal of Jupiter, one of good, the other of evil, in which potions are ready for men to drink:—

> "Two urns by Jove's high throne have ever stood:
> The source of evil one, and one of good;
> From thence the cup of mortal man he fills,
> Blessings to these, to those distributes ills;
> To most he mingles *both*: the wretch decreed
> To taste the *bad unmixed*, is cursed indeed;
> Pursued by wrongs, by meagre famine driven,
> He wanders outcast both of earth and heaven."—*Pope.*

Henry, in general, suggests the following:—"The *cup* in the vision is to be a *sword* in the accomplishment of it (ver. 16). (1.) *The just anger of God* sends His judgment (ver. 15; comp. Job xxi. 20, Rev. xiv. 10). The wrath of God in this world is but a "cup," contrasted with the full streams of it hereafter. (2.) *By human hands* the judgment was to be executed. Jeremiah enforces the cup (ver. 17); Nebuchadnezzar wields the sword. (3.) *On whom* the judgment should fall: all the nations within the verge of Israel's acquaintance. (4.) The *certainty and irresistibleness* of the coming judgment (vers. 28, 29). They will not only be loath to take the cup, but will refuse to believe the judgment will ever come; but God will see to it that they drink it." Suggestions:—

(i.) *There is a God who judges in the earth*, to whom all nations are accountable, and by whose judgments they must abide.

(ii.) *God can easily bring to ruin the greatest nations*—the most numerous, powerful, and secure.

(iii.) *Those who have maltreated God's people* will be certainly reckoned with for their deeds. The year of recompense will come on all who have vexed and afflicted Israel.

(iv.) *The predictions of God's prophets* will in due time assuredly be accomplished. Isaiah had long before this prophesied of these nations (chap. xiii., &c.), and now at length these predictions will have complete fulfilling.

(v.) *Those who are ambitious of power and dominion* commonly become the plagues of their generation. Nebuchadnezzar was so proud of his might that he became lost to the sense of right.

(vi.) *The greatest pomp and power of this world are of very uncertain continuance.* Before Nebuchadnezzar's greater force kings themselves must yield and become captives. (See *Addenda* on verse 15: THE WINE-CUP OF FURY.)

Topic: "SHESHACH:" BABYLON REVERSED; BABYLON'S FATE. (Ver. 26.)

I. The term "Sheshach" was a disguised name for magnificent Babylon.

1. *There was a prudential reason at this crisis for concealment* of the reference of this prediction. This prophecy of Babylon's overthrow was one sure to become known to the Chaldeans, and then might have incensed them against the captives. The mention of "the king of Babylon" and "the land of the Chaldeans" in verse 12, was doubtless a later insertion into the text, and has no place in the Septuagint (See *Lit. Crit., supra.*) But this hidden reference would not be understood by the captors, though well known in its reference by the captives. Consequently there was *no severity* shown in Chaldea, either to Jeremiah (chap. xxxix. 11), nor those of his nation who favoured surrender to Chaldea rather than to Egypt.

2. *There was much ingenuity shown in the literary method of concealment.* (See *Lit. Crit., supra*, on the *inverted letters* which are here used for *Babel.*) Also (and we may accept the further idea), since *Shace* was the name of the festival which would be held at the very hour of Babylon's overthrow, the name would indicate to the exiles not only the *city's fall*, but the *actual season of the year* when the event should transpire. Yet the Chaldeans themselves would decipher no meaning in this mysterious term. Nevertheless this dexterous use of the peculiarly Chaldean syllable "*Shach*" (as in Me-*shach*), would suffice to connect the name with the city in the hour of its fall, when the prediction was pointed out by the Hebrews to their Babylonish captors.

II. The term "Sheshach" became a significant watchword among the Jewish exiles.

1. *Its meaning was to them a gracious prophecy.* Among the exiles it became a pledge of deliverance. It counselled patience, animated hope, and sustained faith. It led them to refuse to "sing the Lord's songs in a strange land," yet to preserve their silenced and suspended harps for future use. It disarmed all inducements to fall into Chaldean idolatry, for it reminded them that as their *Jerusalem* had fallen because of her apostasy to idols, so would Babylon: for Jehovah was a jealous God, and His glory He would not give to others.

2. *Its suggestiveness informed them of the issues of the final siege.* When the Medes and Persians arrived at the walls of Babylon and laid siege, the Chaldeans were proudly scornful of their demands to surrender, and trusted to the strength of their walls, the splendour of their fortifications, the resources of their city, and contemned the daring foe! But Judah "knew the time of her visitation," and "*Sheshach*" became the watchword which sufficed to interpret the meaning of the siege and forecast the issues thereof. When Cyrus was at the gates of Babylon, the festival *Shace* was being held, and both king and people had abandoned themselves to idolatrous carousals. While they besotted themselves, the exiles, on the other hand, would eagerly scan "the signs of the times," praying to the God of Israel for the fulfilment of their ardent hopes, that the "set time to favour Zion might come," and "*Sheshach*" would be whispered among them as indicating their confidence as to the nearness of the end. (See *Addenda* on verse 26: THE KING OF SHESHACH SHALL DRINK.)

III. The term "Sheshach," then, held a definite prediction of the city's fall.

1. *In the inversion of the letters* ("Sheshach" for "Babel") there was *signified the inverted fortunes of the city.* It would come to pass that the pride of Babel

would be *reversed;* all its glory should be changed, and its lofty name be covered with discredit.

2. *This final overthrow of the conqueror and captor was required in order to vindicate God's righteousness.* "If Judah was to be punished, and Chaldea be invested with universal empire, was it," asks Dr. Payne Smith, "because the Chaldeans were *more approved by God* in *religion* and *morals* than the Jews? No. They were simply God's scourge, made fit to be so by the vigour of one man; and at his death punishment will befall them also *for their own sins;* and in little more than twenty years after Nebuchadnezzar's death, their empire will cease for ever. They existed *only to do the base office of an executioner*, and, that done, they will be laid aside."

Topic: GOD'S CONTROVERSY WITH HUMANITY. *"A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, He will plead with all flesh; He will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord"* (ver. 31).

Universal disturbance is predicted. It would come in this instance through the military aggressions and devastations of Nebuchadnezzar, who would march over the nations in irresistible conquests. But behind Nebuchadnezzar's armies Jehovah would stand, vindicating the laws which those nations had violated, and punishing the wicked with the sword. (See *Addenda* on verses 28 and 29.)

(i.) *In world-wide commotions we must recognise the direct action of the Lord God.* "When judgments are abroad" there is evidence that God has arisen to "shake terribly the earth" (Isa. ii. 19).

(*a.*) These universal commotions *occur not by haphazard.* (*b.*) Natural agencies [as now Nebuchadnezzar's armies] are supernatural instrumentalities. (*c.*) There is *a purpose and a providence* in such vast and solemn commotions. (*d.*) *Reverently yield to these "pleadings"* of God whenever they occur.

(ii.) *Great crises occur when God places humanity in arraignment.* He may send out war over the earth, or pestilence, or fruitless seasons, or paralysis of industries; but in human history there do periodically occur such grave epochs when God manifestly enters into controversy with His creatures.

(*a.*) *Wrong*, which is in the world, seems at definite periods to *culminate.* Iniquity gets into the ascendant everywhere, and requires a mighty shaking and shattering to be cast down again into shame and defeat. (*b.*) God calls humanity *to answer for its wrongdoing.* He has His own manifold ways of doing this—war, disaster, &c. (*c.*) Judgments sweep over the earth in *stern protestations.* Calamities are God's proclamations of displeasure.

A controversy implies that *wrong exists which God will have set right.*

I. **There is just cause why God should come into controversy with humanity.**

1. He has given us *natural revelation*, yet we have *misused* it (Rom. i. 17–20).

2. He has made Himself and His will *known in human history*, yet we have *ignored* Him (Prov. i. 24, 25).

3. He has sent His *messengers* to the world, yet we have *repudiated* them (comp. ver. 4 with Matt. xxi. 35, &c.; xxiii. 34, to the end).

4. He sought to *reconcile humanity to Himself*, yet we have *refused His grace* (comp. 2 Cor. v. 19 with Heb. ii. 3, x. 28).

II. **Human history has been interrupted by epochs in which God has pleaded with all flesh.**

1. Recall to thought the *black dates* which have become marked on all national records. Not a nation has been without them; times of awful solemnity and sorrow.

2. *Grave crises* have also come upon *many nations simultaneously.* International calamities and wars and plagues, by which countries and peoples have been plunged into common distress and amaze.

3. Over the *whole habitable world* great controversies have gone forth from God. What was the ancient *Flood*, what the first preaching of *the Cross*, what the *Reformation*, what those *modern evangelistic and revival* movements, but occasions when God "pleaded with all flesh"?

III. A delinquent world will assuredly be brought to judgment by Jehovah.

1. It is *an eternal law and necessity* that wickedness shall be rebuked and punished (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 4–6).

2. It is predetermined that the *lives of men* shall be brought *before the throne of God* for judgment (Acts xvii. 31).

Application.—(*a.*) God *now* "pleads" with us for our *reconciliation and salvation.* (*b.*) His "controversy" will be the *more dreadful* with us if, *by rejecting His grace*, we compel Him to "plead" with us in judgment. (See *Addenda* on verse 30.)

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XXV.: NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

Ver. 1. "THE FOURTH YEAR OF JEHOIAKIM." This date was the turning-point in Oriental history. The armies of Egypt and Babylon met in deadly and decisive battle at Charchemish, and God gave the ascendancy to Nebuchadnezzar. Immediately after this battle, and probably before Nebuchadnezzar and his victorious army appeared in Palestine, Jeremiah delivered this prophecy, which foretells the greatness of the Babylonish empire, mentions the countries over which it is to extend, and the exact term of its duration. During this year Jeremiah had, in vain, been seeking, with the wisdom of a statesman and the fervour of a patriot, to detach Jehoiakim from Egypt and induce him to accept Nebuchadnezzar's supremacy. This led Jehoiakim—a year later—both to burn the prophet's roll (comp. chap. xxxvi. 32), to endeavour to slay the prophet (*ibid.* 26), and thereby to silence all further Divine messages to him, till, at the close of his reign, the Chaldeans were marching upon Jerusalem.—Comp. *Speaker's Commentary.*

Ver. 4. "JEHOVAH HATH SENT TO YOU ALL HIS PROPHETS." God is a long-suffering God, who desireth not the death of a sinner; therefore He gives the first world one hundred and twenty years' time for repentance (Gen. vi. 3). Lot preaches to Sodom and Gomorrah more than twenty-five years (Gen. xiii. 13, xxix. 14). Christ preaches repentance three and a half years, and the Apostles forty years, before the destruction of Jerusalem. But dost thou not know that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?—*Cramer.*

Ver. 5. "TURN YE EVERY ONE FROM HIS EVIL WAY." Each must separately repent and turn from his own sin. None is excepted, lest they should think their own guilt extenuated because the evil is general.—*Jamieson.*

Ver. 9. "NEBUCHADNEZZAR, MY SERVANT." This title, so remarkable in the Old Testament as the especial epithet, first of Moses, and then of the Messiah, is thrice given to Nebuchadnezzar, and marks the *greatness of the commission* intrusted to him.—*Payne Smith.*

The Jews boasted that they were the *servants* of Jehovah. Yet a heathen king is here called God's servant, as being *more His servant* than they were, and as serving God in *destroying them!*

Ver. 10. "SOUND OF THE MILLSTONES." As a household morning employment, all the mills of a town would be heard together, since the custom was for only enough corn for the day's need to be ground at a time. The labour was severe.

"LIGHT OF THE CANDLE," *i.e.*, *night-light.* These are so common in use in the East that the poorest burn candles all through the night.

Payne Smith suggest beautifully that the "sound of the millstones" was the *sign of the preparation of the daily meal*, and that the "light of the candle" was the sign of *the assembling of the family after the labours of the day were over.*

Ver. 15. THE WINE-CUP OF FURY. A "cup" is often in Scripture put for *affliction*, and "wine" for extreme confusion and wrath. Here the figure indicates *stupifying judgments* (comp. chaps. xlix. 12, li. 7.) We need not suppose, with Michaelis, that Jeremiah actually offered a wine-cup to the ambassadors of the nations assembled at Jerusalem. "*Make them drink*," *i.e.*, by denunciations of their sins and prediction of their doom.

Ver. 26. "THE KING OF SHESHACH SHALL DRINK." "Belshazzar, the bezzling king of Babylon, whilst he is quaffing in the vessels of God's house to the honour of Shat (*Shesac, id est poculum lætitiæ aut vanitatis, vel sericum tuum*), the Babylonian goddess, whence those feast days were called σακέαι ἡμέραι, being like the Roman Saturnalia. Antichrist also, who hath troubled all the kingdoms of the earth, shall himself perish, together with his Babylon the great, which hath made the nations drunk with the wine of her fornications."—*Trapp.*

Ver. 28. "YE SHALL CERTAINLY DRINK." No effort of theirs to escape the destruction will avail.

"If they either do not believe thy threatenings, or else disregard them, as thinking themselves sufficiently provided against hostile invasion, you shall let them know that the judgments denounced against them are God's irreversible decree."—*Lowth.*

"The destruction of the heathen nations was fixed and certain. Of this they might be assured by the fact that the Jews, who were Jehovah's peculiar people, were not spared."—*Henderson.*

Ver. 29. "I BEGIN TO BRING EVIL ON THE CITY WHICH IS CALLED BY MY NAME." "If God spares not the city in which He has chosen a temple for Himself, and designed His name to be invoked, how can He spare aliens to whom He has never made any promise, as He regarded them as strangers? *If, then, the green tree is consumed, how can the dry remain safe?* This is the import of the passage. The Apostle uses the same argument in other words; for after having said that *judgment would begin at God's house*, he immediately shows how dreadful the vengeance of God would be upon His open enemies (1 Pet. iv. 17). . . . It is better for us that God should begin with us, as at length the wicked shall in their turn be destroyed; and that we should endure temporal evils, that God may at length raise us up to the enjoyment of His paternal favour. And for this reason Paul also says that it is a *demonstration of the just judgment of God* when the faithful are exposed to many evils (2 Thess. i. 4, 5)."—*Calvin.*

Ver. 30. "THE LORD SHALL ROAR." In highly poetic language the judgment of the Gentiles is described. Jehovah has risen like a lion from his covert, and at His roaring the whole world is filled with terror and confusion. Sheep and shepherds roll on the ground in consternation, but cannot escape; for, like a storm-wind, judgment stalks abroad, and the slain of the land cover the ground from one end of the earth unto the other, and lie unwept and without burial.—*Payne Smith.*

The roar was first to go forth over Judea, wherein were "the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. c. 3), and thence into heathen lands.

"HE WILL MIGHTILY ROAR." Pliny reporteth of the lioness, that she bringeth forth her whelps dead, and so they remain for the space of three days, until the lion, coming near to the den where they lay, lifteth up his voice and roareth so fiercely that they presently revive and rise. The "Lion of the tribe of Judah" will roar to like purpose at the last day; and doth afore, when He pleaseth, roar terribly upon His enemies, to their utter amazement (Joel iii. 16; Amos i. 2, iii. 8).—*Trapp.*

"The strict judgment of God sounds much stronger and clearer than we can bear. Hence the six hundred thousand men were so terrified when they heard the voice of God, that they said, 'Let not God speak with us lest we die' (Exod. xx. 19). It is well that we do not

refuse to hear, or stop our ears against the sweet sound of God's voice in the sacred office of the preacher, because we can have it (Ps. xcv. 8); or the time will come when we shall be obliged to hear its awful roaring, which God forbid. 'For when the lion roars, who shall not be afraid? (Amos iii. 8.)"—*Cramer.*

Ver. 37. *Theme:* PEACEABLE HABITATIONS OVERTHROWN. "The peaceable habitations are cut down, because of the fierce anger of the Lord."

I. Wrath destroys the peacefulness of any habitation into which it enters, be it (*a*) a *home;* (*b*) the *heart;* (*c*) a *church.*

II. Divine displeasure, if provoked, will drive us into homeless desolation. (*a.*) *All refuges will fail to shelter us.* (*b.*) *Pleasant scenes are wrecked if God be angry.* (*c.*) "*Peaceable habitations*" *require,* for their very existence, *that we be "at peace with God."*

III. Peace and safety are possible to those who live in God's love. All others will be homeless in the evil day. But sudden destruction shall *not* come upon them. Their souls shall dwell in peace, *always secure and at rest.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. About three years earlier than the prophecy of preceding chapter. *Cf.* chapter vii. with this, and it is evident that they are synchronous. Evidently this narrative records the dangers to which Jeremiah exposed himself by the delivery of that faithful protest against his nation's iniquity.' Jehoiakim had just ascended the throne, and forthwith inaugurated a course of public apostasy which called forth from Jeremiah this pungent and fearless remonstrance. Naturally enough it greatly incensed the "priests and the prophets" (ver. 8); though the "princes" spoke out boldly for his defence (ver. 16); and through the interposition of Ahikam, Jeremiah escaped violence (ver. 24). *Cf.* critical notes to chapter vii.

For—2. Contemporary Scriptures; 3. National Affairs; and 4. Contemporaneous History, *cf.* chap. vii., *in loc.*

5. Geographical References.—Ver. 6. "*Shiloh:*" *cf.* note, chap. vii. 12, *in loc.* Ver 10. "*The entry of the new gate:*" i.e., the gate originally erected by Jotham (2 Kings xv. 35), "the higher gate," and now recently restored. The *Targum* reads, the *new* gate. Ver. 20. "*Kirjath-jearim:*" *cir.* nine miles north west of Jerusalem, where the ark rested after the destruction of Shiloh, on its return from Philistia.

6. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 18. "*Micah the Morasthite:*" *cf.* Micah i. 1, and iii. 12. The text here is מִכָיָה, *Michayah;* the full form of his name meaning, *Who is like Jah?* But many MSS. omit the Yod, and read simply, מִכָה, *Micah.* His native village, *Moresheth* [Heb. *Morashti*], near Eluthcropolis, in Philistia (Jerome). He was contemporary with Isaiah in Judah, and with Amos and Hosea in Israel.

Ver. 20. "*Urijah the son of Shemaiah:*" nothing more is known of Urijah than is here recorded.

Ver. 22. "*Elnathan the son of Achbor:*" *Achbor* was one of the princes sent to Huldah by Josiah (2 Kings xxii. 12). *Elnathan* was father of Nehushta, the mother of King Jehoiachin, therefore Jehoiakim's father-in-law.

Ver. 24. "*Ahikam the son of Shaphan:*" one of Josiah's messengers to Huldah after the discovery of the copy of the law in the Temple by Hilkiah the priest (2 Kings xxii. 12-14). Hilkiah made known the discovery to *Shaphan* the scribe, most probably this Shaphan. *Ahikam* was father to Gemariah, who lent Jeremiah his room for the public reading of the prophet's roll; and of Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar afterwards made governor of the land (comp. xxxix. 14), indicating that the attachment of the father, Ahikam, to Jeremiah was inherited by his sons.

7. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 2. "*Stand in the gate of the Lord's house:*" see *Homiletic Outlines,* preliminary note, p. 149. "*Unto all the cities of Judah which come to worship*" at one of the three great yearly festivals, perhaps that of Tabernacles, which was the greatest.

Ver. 9. "*All the people were gathered together against Jeremiah:*" properly, "*unto* Jeremiah," forming themselves into a court or congregation to take part in his trial. Ver. 23. "*Graves of the sons of the people:*" see chap. xvii. 19: "*common* people." Some have thought the Jews had a cemetery for the prophets separate from that of the people. The place of burial for the common people was in the Kidron valley.

8. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 19. "*Besought the Lord,*" *lit.,* Soothed by prayer the face of the Lord. חִלָה אֶת־פְּנֵי, *Stroke* the face [Keil]. *Cf.* Exod. xxxii. 11.

General topic of the chapter: "So PERSECUTED THEY THE PROPHETS."

This present life is often one of severity and suffering to God's servants. Yet it is astonishing to find earnest and holy men persecuted and slain for no offence other than that of calling the wicked to desert their sins and care for their spiritual good! We may well ask, "Why, what evil hath he done?" For "a good work" surely men should not rise in hostility to a man of God. Wrong may deserve punishment; but too often right is persecuted and wrong is condoned. So perverse is the human heart.

I. **Prevalent sin called for faithful rebuke.** There was enough wrongdoing and corruption in Zion to constrain a godly soul to vehement protestation. God sent the prophet to remonstrate.

1. The rebuke of a prophet, therefore, should be accepted *as an appeal from God* (vers. 2–5).

2. Such faithful rebukes are *designed to avert heavy and threatening judgments* (vers. 6, 12, 13).

II. **Faithful rebuke aroused violent resentment.** In Jeremiah's protest there was no element of provocation. His message was delivered in no rancorous and vexing words, yet it awoke resentment.

1. Sinners *love their sins too well to desire disturbance*, even though such disturbance is essential to their salvation (vers. 7–9).

2. Warnings of impending doom created *violent hostility to God's messenger* (vers. 10, 11). Angry men must have a victim on whom to expend their hatred. Incensed at God's message, they would avenge themselves on His innocent messenger! This explains persecution. Men cling to their sins, and hate the prophet, as Ahab did Elijah, whose faithful words—"trouble Israel"—disturb them in their evil ways.

III. **Violent resentment faced with courageous fidelity.** The prophet did not quail before their violence. "The righteous is bold as a lion." Yet withal there was no corresponding violence; rather "in meekness he instructed those that opposed" (2 Tim. ii. 25).

1. He used the hour of his arraignment for *one more appeal* to his erring persecutors (vers. 12, 13).

2. He resigned himself to the consequences of his fidelity, knowing that *God would requite* their deeds (vers. 14, 15).

Even so, when our Lord "suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously." "Vengeance is Mine."

IV. **Godly fidelity incurring persecution and death.** Jeremiah's renewed appeal proved effective with the "princes" (ver. 16) and "elders" (ver. 17), and won him their protection. Yet—

1. *Fidelity imperilled Jeremiah's life* (ver. 24); and he would have lost it but for Ahikam's befriending. Faithful work is always done amid peril. Men become our enemies when we tell them the truth. So Jeremiah found it. Micah was a rare exception (vers. 18, 19).

2. *Fidelity cost Urijah his life* (vers. 20–23). Such unrighteous and iniquitous deeds against God's servants assuredly will be punished. "*The dead shall be raised;*" and then, confronted by those they have killed, the wicked shall be judged. There is a judgment to come. Men may silence God's messengers in death now, but God will be heard in the day of judgment.

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XXVI.

Vers. 1 and 2. See Homily on chap. vii. 1, 2.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* PREACH THE WHOLE TRUTH. "*Diminish not a word.*"

Neither preacher nor prophet is the author of what he teaches. If his "commands" *are* his own, they should never be uttered; for he has *no right to speak aught* which God has *not* commanded,

and *no permission to silence* aught which God *has* commanded. "*Speak all the words* that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word."

I. **Inspired commands are the outcome of Divine Wisdom and human necessity.** Much in Scripture we do not care to hear, or do not think wise to teach. Doctrines over which critics stumble. Some severe doctrines do not seem concordant with the gospel of love, &c. But—

1. *God's wisdom* frames the messages. That ought to check our solicitude for the integrity of Revelation. Critics should learn that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men."

2. *Man's necessity* calls forth the message. God sees our case, our need, our sins, our perils, and sends the commands which are suitable.

Hence every word of God is *important* and *imperative*.

II. **Preachers have no liberty of silence or selection.** If any haste to preach without a Divine commission, God will put them to silence. But if God has sent a prophet or preacher, He must "*speak all*," &c., and "*not diminish a word*."

1. God's messenger may *not silence* Divine commands.

2. God's messenger may *not select* Divine commands. He has no liberty allowed to forbear speaking; neither has he liberty allowed to choose and discriminate between the commands, taking out one from among the rest, and speaking only such as he deems fit and right. He has to "declare *all* the counsel of God."

III. **God's messages may not be minimised either in quantity or emphasis.** "Diminish not a word."

A preacher may indeed go through all the commands, and yet by *frequent reiteration of a few* may give them *a prominence which overshadows the rest*, and thus "diminishing" those he overshadows.

Or, he may preach some with *more emphasis and eloquence than others*, thereby "diminishing" the others.

1. This may be *through prejudice or preference*. Then he makes his own limited mental bias the test of the comparative value and importance of revealed truths!

2. He may do this through *mistaken solicitude* or *sentimental charity*. There are preachers who cannot allow themselves to speak *the stern teachings* of Scripture; because (in their poor fancy) they disagree with the tender love of God, and the sweet grace of the Gospel of Christ; because, also, they wound the gentle hearts of their hearers, and make appeal to fears in men rather than filial trust and love.

3. He may do this for *fear* or *favour of men*. Then he prostrates God's truth before the time-serving spirit which seeks to "please men." This is sacrilegious! But we may *not suppress* nor *soften* any teaching or command for fear of giving offence; neither may we set forth *coldly* and *indirectly* what can only by forcible statement do good.

God says: "*Speak all*" . . . "*diminish not a word*." Compare Deut. iv. 2, xii. 32; Prov. xxx. 6; Acts xx. 27; 2 Cor. ii. 17, iv. 2; Rev. xxii. 19.

See *Addenda*: PREACH THE WHOLE TRUTH.

Vers. 3–6. Compare Homily on chap. xviii. 7–10. *Theme*: CONDITIONAL COVENANTS.

Ver. 6. "THIS HOUSE LIKE SHILOH." Comp. Homily on chap. vii. 12–14. "*Violated sanctuaries doomed*."

Ver. 8. "THOU SHALT SURELY DIE." The charge against Jeremiah was that of uttering falsehood in Jehovah's name, an act punishable with death (Deut. xviii. 20). The tumult against him was raised by the priests and false prophets.

Ver. 11. "SPAKE THE PRIESTS AND THE PROPHETS UNTO THE PRINCES." Jeremiah was both a *priest* and a *prophet*, and should therefore have received generous treatment at the hands of "priests and prophets;" but "a man's foes are they of his own household," while "*jealousy* is as cruel as the grave."

The "*princes*" were members of the

king's household, and formed part of the Council of State. Jeremiah is careful to discriminate here, and to record that he received acts of kindness from the "princes" and also from the "elders" (ver. 17), who were rulers of the whole land. In like manner Luke discriminates between the generous conduct of Gamaliel and the injustice of other members of the Sanhedrim (Acts v. 34).

Vers. 12–15. *Theme:* How to Answer Cavillers and Accusers. The prophet was arraigned before the highest tribunal, charged with a political offence—he had "prophesied against this city." Here it will be noticeable that our Lord was similarly indicted before Pilate. See how Jeremiah bore himself in this scene of great excitement and irritation.

I. His unfaltering assurance of a Divine commission. Cavil though they might against his message, and threaten him with death for delivering it, yet—

1. *He knew that God had sent him to them with this message.* "The Lord sent," &c. (ver. 12); "Of a truth the Lord hath sent me," &c. (ver. 15).

2. *He knew that his prophecy had been faithfully delivered.* He had uttered nought in malice, nor suppressed aught through timidity; but "all the words ye have heard" (ver. 12) were literally God's words through him to them Thus he was sustained by—

(*a.*) Assured authority from Jehovah.

(*b.*) Conscious integrity in his work.

II. His importunate earnestness in pleading with his accusers. Having thus far vindicated himself, Jeremiah now—

1. *Seizes the opportunity* to plead with his hearers (ver. 13). It might be his final chance of a direct appeal to his sinning nation. What ardour of religious feeling! what godly patriotism is thus manifested!

2. *Fearlessly exhorts* his audience *to repentance and reformation.* He was arraigned because he had charged their sins upon them. Yet now even, before this angry assembly, he appeals again to them to desert their sins, and thus avert God's displeasure. "Reform your life, and hearken to the voice of the Lord, and it will be better for you." "You do not wish me to thunder away at you; reform, then, and I can let it alone."—(*Zinzendorf.*)

III. His grand resignation to the consequences of fidelity. His faithful pleading might incense them the more; yet—

1. *He is ready to die* rather than keep silence (ver. 14).

2. *He dare not let any concern for self hinder him* in his witness. "As *for me*"—as if what became of him were wholly unimportant in the presence of his nation's perils. It equals Paul's martyr-like spirit: "I am ready to die also at Jerusalem;" "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren." Note—

(*a.*) *His splendid indifference to life and policy.* It argues possession of highest religious assurance, conscious safety in God, and blessed hopes of a future world.

(*b.*) *His all-absorbing eagerness for his people.* Self cannot have a thought when his people are nearing destruction. Such all-consuming zeal naturally impresses and conquers hearts. It did so here (ver. 16).

IV. His solemn warnings against criminal conduct (ver. 15).

1. Knowing God was with him in his work, he realised then that *Jehovah would avenge any violence done to him.*

2. Knowing that he was innocent of any crime, having only faithfully discharged a Divine commission, he reminded them that *on them would fall the curse of his blood.*

Note: Men do not escape the punishment of sin by silencing God's preacher, or by getting rid of the obnoxious witness against their sins. They double the crime by such conduct.

There was a *yearning pathos* in Jeremiah's warning: no anger, no menacing; but "knowing the terror of the Lord, he persuaded men." Thus may cavillers be silenced and adversaries won.

See *Addenda:* Fearlessness.

On "Amend your ways," see Homily on chap. vii. 3.

Ver. 16. "This man is not worthy to die." Jeremiah's address secured—

(i.) THEIR CONVICTION: for they recognised that he had "spoken to them in the name of the Lord." Instead of convicting Jeremiah, "the princes and people" unanimously convicted the "priests and prophets" of falsely charging him.

(ii.) HIS OWN ACQUITTAL. "This man is not worthy of death." Instead of condemning Jeremiah, they sent him forth from the tribunal freed from all charges.

Matthew Henry here reflects thus—

"And are they willing to own that he did indeed speak to them 'in the name of the Lord,' and that that Lord was their God? Why then did they not amend their ways and doings, and take the method he prescribed to prevent the ruin of their country? (Matt. xxi. 25.) Note: It is a pity that those who are so far convinced of the Divine original of gospel preaching as to protect it from the malice of others, do not submit to the power and influence of it themselves."

Vers. 17–19. *Theme:* A PRECEDENT JUSTIFYING THE PROPHET'S ACQUITTAL. Certain elders arose and put the audience in mind of a former case, as is usual with us in going to judgment; for the wisdom of our predecessors is a direction to us.

(i.) *Was it thought strange that Jeremiah prophesied against this city and the temple?* Micah did so before him, even in the reign of Hezekiah, that reign of reformation. (See Micah iii. 12.)

By this it appears that a man may be, as Micah was, a true prophet of the Lord, and yet may prophesy the destruction of Zion. When we threaten *secure sinners* with the taking the Spirit of God and the kingdom of heaven away from them, and *declining Churches* with the removal of the candlestick, we say no more than what has *many a time been said before*, and what we have the warrant of God's Word to say.

(ii.) *Was it thought fit by the princes to justify Jeremiah in what he had done?* It was what Hezekiah had done in like case.

(*a.*) Was Micah impeached for his prophecy? No; the king and nation took the warning he gave them.

(*b.*) Hezekiah got good by the preaching, and therefore certainly could do no harm to the preacher.

(*c.*) It is good to deter ourselves from sin, by the consideration of the mischief we shall incur thereby. "Thus might we procure great evil against our souls." Comp. *Matthew Henry.*

Vers. 20–23. *Theme:* URIJAH'S PERSECUTION AND DEATH. Doubtless this Urijah came some time after Jeremiah; this incident is added to the foregoing to show the ferocity of Jehoiakim against faithful prophets.

Note: Urijah re-uttered Jeremiah's words (ver. 20); he "*prophesied*," &c., "*according to the words of Jeremiah*;" and this repetition determined the king to silence the prophets at any cost.

I. **Guilty men hate to hear Divine denunciations.** Jehoiakim grew uncontrollably violent when Jeremiah's words were repeated (ver. 20).

II. **Earnest preachers of God fulfil their work amid dangers** (ver. 21). They expose their lives to the violence of those they denounce. He who proclaims against men's sins provokes their antagonism. "Genuine ministers of God have no favour to expect from those who are HIS enemies."—(*Clark.*)

III. **The courage which defies perils is not always possessed by even faithful witnesses of God.** Urijah fled to Egypt (ver. 21). Jeremiah did *not* flee, and was spared; Urijah hastened to protect himself, and was slain. Our running and anxiety are of no use. It is better to act faithfully and fearlessly, risking the result.

IV. **Angry men, incensed against God's witness, will take great trouble to avenge themselves** (ver. 22). Comp. Ahab's efforts to find Elijah.

V. **Death and degradation may prove the earthly penalty of godly work** (ver. 23). It was so with the Christian martyrs; and is now sometimes the penalty of missionary devotion. But such sufferers for truth and righteousness are canonised in God's martyr-

ology, and "great is their reward in heaven."

See *Addenda:* PERSECUTION.

Ver. 24. *Theme:* HEROIC FRIENDSHIP. On "*Ahikam*" see *Personal References* at head of chapter.

Note 1. Since Ahikam's son, Gedaliah, showed attention to the prophet, and another son of the same name was afterwards made governor of the land by the Chaldeans (chap. xxxix. 14), we may suppose this family agreed with Jeremiah's political policy and counsels.

Note 2. The son's friendship for the prophet was the result of the father's (Ahikam's) attachment. Good parents hand down a patrimony of generous sympathy to their children, which provokes them to "love and good works." Thus the good deeds of the father reappeared in his sons.

I. Valorous allegiance with a persecuted prophet. "The hand of Ahikam was with Jeremiah." This friendship was—

1. *Open and avowed:* it was well known in the land that Ahikam befriended Jeremiah. Obadiah (1 Kings xviii.) *secreted* his friendship.

2. *Influential.* For Ahikam had sufficient influence at court and in the country to counter-check Jehoiakim's malicious designs against the prophet. God's servants have not been without powerful friends.

3. *Resolute.* He resisted the clamour of "*the people.*" Thus he faced king and country fearlessly as Jeremiah's friend. All this showed—(*a*) *great heroism;* (*b*) *noble piety;* (*c*) *fearless fidelity.* Such friendship is not frequent, but it is worthy highest praise.

II. Valuable attachment to God's servant. Ahikam's friendship proved specially helpful to Jeremiah.

1. *It asserted itself in a perilous hour.* He who flees in adversity is not a true friend.

2. *It prevailed against popular clamour.* It is not easy to become unpopular for our friends. But Christ's servants have to face popular contumely for His sake; and many disciples have had to brave public scorn and hate for their attachment to Christ's followers.

3. *It preserved to the nation its truest benefactor.* Had the people put Jeremiah to death, they would have slain the man who gave wisest counsels, and proved at last its noblest leader. We impoverish and harm ourselves by antagonism to God's messengers. So, in withstanding the people's clamour, Ahikam acted as the nation's friend, as well as Jeremiah's champion.

Application.—Matthew Henry suggests that *God can raise up great men to protect good men;* and this should encourage us amid the dangers incident to duty.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XXVI.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 2. PREACH THE WHOLE TRUTH. "Luther, of whom Richter has said that 'his words were half battles,' when he first began to preach, suffered unheard agony. 'O Dr. Staupitz, Dr. Staupitz!' said he to the Vicar General of his order, 'I cannot do it, I shall die in three months; indeed I cannot do it.' Dr. Staupitz replied, 'Well, Sir Martin, if you must die, you must; preach, man, preach; and then live or die as it happens.' So Luther preached, and lived; and he became one great whirlwind of energy to work without resting in this world."—*Spurgeon.*

"An iron key is better than one made of gold *if it will better open the door*, for that is all the use of a key."—*Augustine.*

"The words of a preacher ought *purgere non palpare*, to prick the heart, not smooth and coax."—*Jerome.*

Somerfield, just before his death, speaking of his recovery, said, "Oh, if I might be raised again! *How I could preach!* I could preach as I never preached before. I have *taken a look into eternity!*"

Vers. 12–15. FEARLESSNESS. "What can I fear?" asked Chrysostom before the Pro-consul. "Will it be *death?* but you know that 'Christ is my life,' and that I shall gain by death. Will it be

exile? but 'the earth with all its fulness is the Lord's.' Will it be the *loss of wealth?* but 'we brought nothing into this world, and we can carry nothing out.' Thus, all the terrors of the world are contemptible in my eyes, and I smile at all its good things. Poverty I do not fear; riches I do not sigh for; from death I do not shrink; and life I do not desire except for the progress of your souls."

Vers. 20–23. PERSECUTION. Seeing a Christian woman go cheerfully to prison, an observer said to her, "Oh, you have not yet tasted of the bitterness of death." She as cheerfully replied, "No, nor ever shall; for Christ hath promised that those who keep His sayings shall not see death."

Ver. 24. NOBLE FRIENDSHIP.

"Great souls by instinct to each other turn,
Demand allegiance, and in friendship burn."
—ADDISON.

"Friendship hath a power
To soothe affliction in her darkest hour."
—H. KIRKE WHITE.

"Deliberate in all things with thy friend.
But, since friends grow not thick on every bough,
Nor every friend unrotten at the core,
First on thy friend deliberate with thyself;
Pause, ponder, sift; not eager in the choice,
Nor jealous of the chosen; fixing, fix;
Judge before friendship, then confide till death.
Well for thy friend, but nobler far for thee:
How gallant danger for earth's highest prize!
A friend is worth all hazards we can run."
—YOUNG.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—**1. Chronology of the Chapter.**—"Beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim." There is authority for reading "*Zedekiah*" instead of "Jehoiakim." Henderson substitutes "Zedekiah," and appeals to chap. xxviii. 1, to the statements in vers. 3 and 12 of this chap. xxvii., to the reading of one of Kennicott's MSS., and to the authority of the Syriac and Arabic versions. Further, Lowth, Blayney, Michaelis, Rosenmüller, Dahler, Maurer, Umbriet, Ewald, Payne Smith, &c., sustain this change of names. The allusion in ver. 12 indicates that Zedekiah is the king meant, for both sections of the chapter are synchronous in time and identical in meaning. Probably the reading in the E. V. may have originated from chap. xxvi. 1. Calvin, however, takes the text as it stands, and suggests that Jeremiah kept this prophecy long secreted in his bosom ere he uttered it. If the true reading is "*Zedekiah*," then "*the fourth year*" of chap. xxviii. 1, agrees with "*in the beginning of the reign*" of chap. xxvii. 1, on the theory that, as Zedekiah's reign lasted eleven years, it was *early* in his reign when the prophecy was proclaimed: *vide* chronological notes to chap. xxi.

For—**2. Contemporary Scriptures**; **3. National Affairs**; and **4. Contemporary History**, *vide* chap. xxi. *in loc.*

5. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 3. "*Zedekiah*": *vide* notes to chap. 1 *in loc.* Ver. 20, "*Jeconiah:*" *vide* chap. xxii. 24. Ver. 7. "*His son, and his son's son.*" Nebuchadnezzar had four successors, Evil-Merodach his *son;* Neriglissar the husband of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter; Laborosoarchad the son of Neriglissar; and Naboned the *son* of Evil-Merodach. The intermediate two successors are passed over in this prophecy, and only the direct descendants, "his *son and son's son,*" are recognised.

6. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 9. "*Prophets, diviners, dreamers, enchanters, sorcerers:*" *vide* on chap. xxiii. 25. These were all sources of prognostication current among the heathen who implicitly rested in such superstitions.

7. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 1. The entire verse is absent from the LXX. Ver. 2. "*Bonds and yokes.*" מֹטוֹת are the two wooden prongs or poles of the "yoke," which were fastened together by "bonds," מוֹסְרוֹת.

Ver. 9. The word "*enchanters*" is by some interpreters derived from עָנָן, *cloud:* cloud-makers or storm-raisers; and by others from עַיִן, *eye,* gazers at the stars and other means of taking omens of futurity.

Ver. 11. "*Serve him. . . till it.*" The same Hebrew root signifies both "serve" and "till, or cultivate. *Serve ye* the king of Babylon, and the land will *serve you* (Calvin).

TOPICAL SURVEY OF THE CHAPTER

Doubtless the five kings (ver. 3) had sent ambassadors to Jerusalem to consult with Zedekiah about entering into a defensive covenant against the threatening and alarming Babylonish power. Jeremiah has to meet these messengers with plain and emphatic statements as to the sure course of events.

I. A summons to submit to the inevitable ascendancy of Babylon.

Those "bonds and yokes" would have to be worn (ver. 2). And what God said to these five kings He said afterwards specifically also to Zedekiah (ver. 12).

i. *The inevitable fact.* Nebuchadnezzar must be supreme, however these kings might think to resist the decree.

1. *Because God was the King of kings.* The Almighty, who *made* "the earth and man and beast," had decisively "*given*" dominion over them all to the one monarch they dreaded (ver. 5). And "none shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

2. *Because Nebuchadnezzar was serving the will of the Supreme King.* Unconsciously doing this, yet none the less doing it. He was God's "servant" (ver. 6). There was a purpose in God's mind, and He had chosen the Babylonish king to fulfil it.

3. *Because a defined period had been set for this ascendancy.* The "*very time of his land*" was clearly fixed in the Divine mind; its beginning and its end (ver. 7). Compare Topic: "*Seventy Years' Captivity*," chap. xxv. 11, 12, *infra*, p. 471.

ii. *The results of resistance.* See ver. 8.

1. Resistance of God's purpose would be *marked by God.* He would carefully note "the nation and the kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar." God was watching. He keeps His eye on the conduct of kings. The Supreme Ruler "looks down from heaven upon the earth to see if any will understand." Having made known His will to these kings, He will observe their action; for resistance of God's purpose is *disobedience against Him.*

2. *Severe punishment from God Himself would follow their disobedience.* He had other agencies at His command besides the armies of Babylon, and would let loose on those who conspired against Nebuchadnezzar "the sword, the famine, and the pestilence;" and the destruction these should effect should be more complete, "until I have consumed them."

"Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth: serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. ii. 10, 11).

II. Warnings against the delusive flatteries of false counsellors.

Evil teachers would not be idle at this crisis: they moved among the people boastful of a higher wisdom and a finer patriotism. Their object was to throw discredit on Jeremiah and lead the nation into a policy of resistance of Babylon.

1. *Flattery assumes many forms:* prophecy, divination, dreams, enchantments, sorcery (ver. 9). It adopts any aspect which may beguile the heart. "Evil seducers" are fertile in resources.

2. *Flatterers appeal to human vanity.* Nothing could more foster the natural arrogance than this statement: "Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon." Those who would lead us to disobey God's word always come with announcement that *no penalties shall follow.* "The serpent said, Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. iii. 4).

But God here points out—

a. The *direful results* to the people of their accepting these flattering counsels (vers. 10, 15).

b. The *merciful ameliorations* which should attend their regarding God's counsels (vers. 11, 17).

III. Promises of preservation and restoration conditional on a wise submission.

Although Jeremiah held out no delusive hope of speedy restoration, but con-

fronted the false prophets' lying words with condemnation (vers. 16, 17), nevertheless he gives cheering assurances to the people if they would hear God's word.

1. *The inevitable conquest would not be disastrous.* The "city" would not "be laid waste" (ver. 17), and captives with sacred treasures would be safe in Babylon (ver. 22).

2. *The cherished symbols of their religion would be preserved.* For God would keep them from destruction even in Babylon (vers. 19–22). "Both priests and people set store by these relics of a bygone magnificence" (*Payne Smith*).

3. *The captivity should terminate in their Divinely effected restoration.* "Until the day that *I visit them*, saith the Lord; then will I bring them up and *restore them to this place*" (ver. 22).

COMMENTS AND OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XXVII.

Vers. 2, 3. YOKES FOR THE CONFEDERATE KINGS.

Notes: The symbol was appropriate, inasmuch as their intention was to form a league to cast off from themselves the "yoke" of Babylon.

Jeremiah must actually have worn his yoke in public as a symbol of subjection to the king of Babylon, for Hananiah took the yoke from the prophet's neck and broke it (chap. xxviii. 10, 11). Consequently we must infer that the bonds and yokes were literally given to these "messengers" for their royal masters.

These "yokes" were, in this instance (says Henderson), the collars placed on the necks of slaves to which chains were attached.

Jeremiah's task demanded much *moral courage* and *steadfast faith in God;* for his act would seem an insult to these foreign ambassadors, and a provocation to his own countrymen, who were so hopeful of resisting Nebuchadnezzar's aggression by this conspiracy.

Note—

i. *Unpopular tasks may have to be performed by God's servants.*

ii. *A blow struck at pride may save men from great disasters.*

iii. *Faithful servants of God may have to imperil themselves in averting perils from others.* Jeremiah had to bear the anger his mission incurred in endeavouring to rescue these confederating kings from their ruinous policy.

Ver. 5. *Theme:* GOD THE SUPREME LORD OF KINGS

I. **God's all-commanding power is set** *in contrast with the confederated power* of these puny kings. Their combination would be futile to *alter events which He had ordained.*

II. **God's supreme lordship is** affirmed as *explaining the temporary ascendancy* determined for the Babylonish monarch. It was not for *his merits*, but for *Jehovah's purposes.*

III. **God's government of men is** *regulated by moral aims* and is designed for the *vindication of righteous laws.* He was now employing Nebuchadnezzar to *chastise pride and apostasy.*

M. Henry remarks here: "The things of the world are not the best things, for God often gives the largest share of them to bad men, that are rivals with Him and rebels against Him. *Dominion* is not founded *in grace.* Those who have not any colourable title to eternal happiness may yet have a justifiable title to their temporal good things."

Ver. 5. *Theme:* MEETNESS BEFORE GOD.

"And have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me." A principle rules the universe—the absolute sovereignty of God. Evils come of acknowledging this in theory but not in practice; much loss of stability—repining—waywardness—disobedience, &c.

I. **God is the proprietor of all.** He tells all the kings that He made all the lands and gave them all to *one*, because "it seemeth meet to Him."

1. *Man's forgetfulness of this in daily life.* We live among things, all of which

have an Owner higher than ourselves! We do not trace the Father in the gifts He surrounds us with.

2. The *harmony of man's being requires a sense of dependence.* He is not happy till he realise dependence on God. Use possessions as God's: this gives pleasure in their use.

3. *Depression results from stopping short of God.* We are satisfied with nothing till we see God in it.

II. Wisdom and sovereignty go together. "Unto whom it *seemed meet* unto Me."

1. *No comfort* to know we live under an absolute Sovereign. Sovereignty might be deleterious to us. But every course of action He determines on is so determined *because of its true goodness:* it is not arbitrary, but the purpose of deliberate wisdom.

2. God gives according to *seeming fitness.* Our acting on this principle often proves a mistake. We err. But God *sees* deeper than what *seems.*

III. The unerring mind of God: *i.e.*, concerning "the meetness of things." The thought of it should lead us to—

1. *Cultivate an adoring spirit.* Avoid what the natural spirit in us would prompt to, viz., criticism and probable discontent. Cherish the song of Moses and the Lamb—"Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

2. *Rest on Him in simple belief.* With an unveiled intelligence sometimes, and sometimes in darkest nights. We are hidden in clefts of a rock when He passes by. If we want to see the reasons, or to reconcile God's ways with our notions, we shall remain troubled to the end.

3. There is immense comfort for us in *reposing in God's law of "meetness."* It takes you behind all fogs and mistakes. Jesus Himself went there: "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." It assures us that right principles are at work. It affirms that He can do for us, and give to us, and keep from us, *as He knows best for us.*

4. The effect of contemplating this "meetness" will be *submission*, grounded on the consciousness that there is no injustice being done us by God. And we shall submit (*a*) *from a wise consciousness of the uselessness of contending with the mind of God;* for what seems right to Him cannot be changed. We shall come to submit, too, (*b*) *from the consciousness that all things are being arranged on deeper principles than we can investigate.* We shall quiet repinings by the thought that my Father sees meet, and therefore I leave the why of it: there will be resignation.

5. So with *permitted evil.*

6. Equally so with the existence of some *mysteries*—possibly *everlasting.*

7. The satisfaction of the heart which recognises "meetness." For so "the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds." "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."—*Constructed and condensed from "Breviates" by Rev. P. B. Power, M.A.*

Ver. 5. *Theme:* THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

"*I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me.*"

Divine declaration of a well-attested fact, *i.e.*, the supreme power of God and the impotency of man: *e.g.*, Sennacherib (2 Kings xix. 35–37), "who had the night before been gathering up his strength like a proud tower to dash himself against the towers of Zion. When the morning dawns his 180,000 men are still there, with sword and spear and helmet and streaming banner; but these banners wave over a silent camp, the trumpet lies beside silent lips—it is a camp of death. Sword and spear are still intact, but the arms that wielded them are impotent. The destroying angel has descended at midnight and converted the Assyrian camp into a sepulchre!" Also, *e.g.*, destruction of Spanish Armada as if by miracle.

I. God as Creator. "I have made the earth," &c., His prerogative to rule, to govern, and to direct.

Directing all the operations of nature to their proper end. All things hang on His will and are dependent upon Him. The starry hosts of heaven de-

pending upon Him for their course, as well as the meanest moss or lichen on the wall for its growth. Not only every flower, but every portion of it—its petals, its colour, its form, its odour—are distinct witnesses to an all-wise, beneficent Creator.

II. As Creator of all, He is the Father of all.

Hence as Father, He ruleth with *authority*. And this authority is absolute. All men do not accept this. Sin, bold and impudent, with clenched fist, defies the Almighty, and with blasphemy from depraved souls defy Him. The FOLLY of it. God "breaketh down," &c. (Job xii. 14), as an absolute Sovereign; man's part is to bow to His unchangeable decrees. Pompey boasted that with one stamp of his foot he could rouse all Italy to arms; but God by one word of His mouth can summon the inhabitants of heaven, earth, and the undiscovered worlds to His aid, or bring new creatures into being to do His will.

III. God, as a Father, ruleth also in love. "Like as a father pitieth his children, even so doth the Lord pity them that fear Him." God's love to His people is from everlasting to everlasting.

MANIFESTATIONS of His love abound in the experiences of all. It is perennial, permanent, and complete, providing not only for bodily and physical requirements, but giving to the soul that which satisfies its intensest yearnings and highest aspirations. He held back not His Son. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The cross of Christ—the noonday of everlasting love, the meridian splendour of eternal mercy.—*A. Taylor.*

Ver. 9. HEATHEN AUGURIES.

"The enumeration of the multifarious means and methods for forecasting the future is designed to show the multitude of delusive schemes for supplying the lack of true and real divine inspiration."—*Keil.*

Ver. 12. SUBMISSION TO THE DESTINED CONQUEROR.

Dean Stanley suggests that Jeremiah's counsel of Zedekiah and Jerusalem to submit to Nebuchadnezzar was, on his part, an act of *political prudence* to be imitated by Statesmen and Ecclesiastics, who may be wise in making large concessions of national rights in times of public emergency.

But *Bishop Wordsworth* urges that Jeremiah's conduct in giving these directions was a *religious duty* on his part, since God had revealed to him that the nation was given into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, "His servant," on account of their sins, and they must submit to him as the minister and viceregent of God.

M. Henry remarks: "Many might have prevented destroying providences by humbling themselves under humbling providences. It is better to take up a light cross in our way than pull a heavier one on our heads."

Ver. 14. THE PROPHECY OF LIES. Comp. Notes, &c., on chap. xiv. 14.

Comments—

"The devil often makes *God's Name* (ver. 15) the plea for lies (Matt. iv. 6; vii. 22, 23), the test by which to know false prophets."—*Jamieson.*

"As many wilfully put on nooses and *wish to be deceived*, we ought to notice what the prophet says here, that it is our duty to distinguish the true from the false. . . . We see how sedulously and prudently we ought to take heed lest the devil should fascinate us by his charms, especially when the name of God is pretended. . . . Yet it is a grievous trial, and much to be feared, when impostors creep in and boast that they are true legitimate prophets."—*Calvin.*

"It is one sign of our depraved natures that we are more ready to believe lies than the truth. For when Jeremiah and his colleagues preached, no one believed. But no sooner did the false prophets come and open their mouths, than all their discourses must be spoken directly from heaven (Ps. lxxii. 9). *E.g.*, our mother Eve: what God said was of no account, but what the serpent said was something purely excellent."—*Cramer.*

Ver. 18. *Theme:* PROPHECY TESTED BY PRAYER. "*If they be prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of Hosts,*" &c.

A scathing test! "*If,*" "*if.*" Yes, there were two uncertainties; but both would be settled effectually by their attempting the task of intercession with God. If they made the effort to open their lips to God, it would certainly seal up their lips to men; for liars *dare not pray for the success of their lies.*

I. Preaching is easier than praying. In some sense this is so even in truthful prophesying. For—

1. *The hearer* is less searching. Man is our listener in prophesying and preaching, but in prayer we speak to *God!* When, therefore, we address the ear of God, our words falter if we be insincere; and we feel ourselves to be under an Eye which reads us through and through. This is not so when we only address men, who may be deceived.

2. *The act* is less daring. There is awfulness in an address by a sinner to God; whereas, oh the blasphemy of consciously speaking *a lie* direct to Him! Who would not shrink with terror? But a man, though sinful—ah! though a deceiver—will not so hesitate to speak to men.

II. True preaching will be accompanied by intercession. No prophet of God will fail in pleading with God.

1. *Solicitude* for those to whom he prophesies will impel him also to prayer on their behalf.

2. *Success* as a preacher depends on earnestness in prayer.

God's messengers will be much with Him as intercessors.

III. The twofold direction of a preacher's words.

1. Words *from God* to men. For "if they be prophets," and it is equally so with preachers, "the word of the Lord will be with them." They have something to say from God to their fellows.

2. Words *to God* for men. "Let them make intercession to the Lord."

Note—

1. Being put in trust with a word from God makes us humble, dependent, and therefore prayerful.

2. Confidence in our message being true renders us fervent in pleading for its fulfilment.

3. Insincerity would not dare adventure before God with intercessions for His seal to our words, or the success of our prophesying.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—For Chronology of the Chapter, &c., *vide* preceding chapter. The words (ver. 1). "*In the beginning* of the reign," and immediately described as "in the *fourth year*," accords with the common mode of reckoning by dividing a term into two halves. And as Zedekiah reigned eleven years, this date was in the first half—at "*the beginning*" therefore.

Personal Allusions.—Ver. 1. "*Hananiah the son of Azur.*" Nothing known of him; but being "of Gibeon," one of the cities of the priests, he was most probably of the order.

Geographical References.—Ver. 1. "*Gibeon.*" A priestly city (Josh. xxi. 17; 1 Kings iii. 4), now called *El-Jib*, and situate about 40 stadia north-west of Jerusalem.

Manners and Customs.—Ver. 10. "*Hananiah took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck:*" *vide* notes on chap. ii. 20; v. 5.

Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 5. "*Jeremiah.*" Notice that the name appears throughout this chapter in its abbreviated form, יִרְמְיָה, instead of יִרְמְיָהוּ. Marked specially as "Jeremiah *the prophet*," in order more strongly to mark the distinction between him as the true prophet of God in contrast with "Hananiah the prophet."

Ver. 8. "*Evil.*" Some MSS. give the reading רָעָב, *famine*, instead of רָעָה, *calamity, evil.*

HOMILETIC SURVEY OF THE CHAPTER.

LYING PROPHECY DISTINGUISHED FROM TRUE.

Both Hananiah and Jeremiah are styled prophets. Men are not distinguished from each other, as false or true, by a difference of titles, but by a difference o'

deeds; and it is the responsibility of hearers to "try the spirits" and choose between the counterfeit and the true.

The *effrontery* and *offensiveness* of Hananiah in selecting such a scene, and when surrounded by such hearers (ver. 1), for a display of his *pseudo*-prophetic mission in opposition to Jeremiah (for he "spake *unto me;*" it was a kind of *personal attack* on Jeremiah), is in remarkable contrast with Jeremiah's meekness (vers. 6–9).

I. General characteristics of false messages. Hananiah illustrates the *ministry of lies* by which arrogant teachers delude the people.

1. *Divine authority is blasphemously assumed.* Hananiah prefixes to his words the most solemn formula by which inspiration is claimed. Rome equally dares to speak in the Name of God. Lying teachers always fortify their theories by an imposing seriousness and confidence which tends to deceive the simple.

2. *False messages are usually pleasant to their hearers* (vers. 2–4). Possibly Hananiah may have fostered this pleasant prospect within himself until he imagined its truth. "Deceiving and being deceived." Bad men, and they who neglect salvation, who wish good as the issue of a life of evil, find it possible to persuade themselves that good cometh. And false prophets are always at hand to quiet fear and lull apprehension.

3. *Extreme emphasis is needed to make doubtful messages seem really true* (vers. 10, 11). A lie needs strong language to make it sound like truth. Hananiah had to act with startling boldness in order to keep up his delusion. Deceivers are driven to great daring, in word and deed, in order to encourage the credulity they entice.

4. *Defeat ultimately covers the false prophet with shame.* The lying words fail in fulfilment (vers. 8, 9); and the righteous judgment of God asserts itself in their personal destruction (vers. 15–17).

II. Distinguishing features of true prophecy. Jeremiah represents here the faithful teacher of Divine oracles and salutary truths.

1. *The people's present good is tenderly desired.* Even though the pleasant messages are false, he would gladly say, "Amen, the Lord do so," to all words of hope. The prophet of God may not be able to predict good, yet he would fain do so if he dared; for he wishes only the well-being even of those against whom he witnesses in God's name. (Comp. chap. viii. 21.)

2. *Yet, no delusion can be permitted.* He may not say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." And he is too fully convinced of the falsity of alluring hopes to sanction them (vers. 7–9). If houses are being reared on sands, he must foretell the destroying storm.

3. *God's own message, however unwelcome, must be proclaimed* (vers. 12–14); even though it tell of "yokes of iron" and tyrannical despotism. To soften down God's terrible messages into "smooth things" is a crime against fidelity to God and duty to man.

4. *Liars must be refuted by the messenger of truth* (ver. 15). This is no task to be coveted, and it requires courage; but false leaders have to be "withstood to the face," and told frankly that they lie! Paul thus withstood Peter, and Luther thus withstood the Pope and his emissaries, and honest believers have ever since had like services to perform. Deceivers must be met in personal confutation and their heresies demolished.

5. *Vindication is on the side of truth* (ver. 17). Jeremiah thus received another Divine assurance of his mission, and an additional encouragement to prosecute his work with confidence and boldness as the prophet of Jehovah.

COMMENTS AND HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 3. *Within two full years.* Probably this period was fixed by Hananiah in the belief that the international confederacy being formed would within that time defeat Nebuchadnezzar.

Ver. 11. *Theme:* SELF IN SERVICE. "*And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.*"

This, compared with xxvi. 14, leads to the same truth; laying aside of "self" in God's service when called upon to give testimony for Him. Hananiah takes the yoke, breaks it, thus discredits Jeremiah's prophecy in the presence of the people, yet all we read is—"Jeremiah went his way." Left it to God to vindicate His own honour; which He soon did very terribly.

So before the princes (in xxvi.) he tells out uncompromisingly all the truth, though he knew he did it at the peril of his life. He was not insensible to suffering, still himself—he was nothing. He tells them that if they slay him they will bring innocent blood upon them, and there leaves the matter. This suggests—

I. The complete abnegation of self in service.

1. There is a period in the Christian life when the existence of "self" *is unsuspected.* Then we mistake its energies for those of the spiritual life. We may carry on the Lord's work without suspicion as to the principle on which we carry it on.

2. Further on, there occurs a *partial detection* of "self." The Spirit of God has led us onward in our education, partly purified our mental vision, raised our standard, made us watchful, distrustful of "self."

3. It is a more advanced stage when we see "self" *enough to dread it greatly;* see it to be ever intrusive, substituting mean and low motives.

4. Yet higher, when we have attained to such knowledge of "self" that we *war with it and repress it,* yet know that we shall never be wholly done with it till heavenly life be gained.

II. See the workings of "self" in service. The *wrong* workings of "self." Much we do may be from *mere natural* feeling; nothing of God in it; and work that seems earnest and true may be the gratification of natural energy. Allowing "self" thus to influence us, we shall be subject to its disturbing influences—

1. *Self-love will be easily wounded* by the *opposition* which meets us.

2. Our *judgment will be warped by personal feeling* and our self-interests being imported,

3. "*Self*" *will drive us too far;* we shall not know when "to go our way;" we shall be for seeing more than the case requires; for passing beyond testimony for God to testimony for ourselves; wanting to secure our own honour and importance.

We cannot separate ourselves from our service; what we are will tell on it. Failure in *service* is generally the consequence of failure in "*self.*" And "self" can *gratify* itself upon what was originally God's: because His message is rejected we look upon the case as if *we* were rejected, and then lose sight of the grievous injury done to God in the apparent one done to us!

All *denominational rancour* comes of the wrong operation of "self" in service. It leads to the confounding persons with principles. And our imperfections bring the cause of God into disrepute.

III. **The expulsion of "self" from service.**

1. HOW TO BE DONE? This is a *work of degrees.*

(1.) By *enlightenment of the Holy Ghost;* showing a man himself, and where "self" works ill results.

(2.) *By sympathy with Christ.* This will make "self" fall out of prominence.

(3.) *By learning our own insignificance.* We have inflated thoughts of our own self-importance.

(4.) We need *realisation that we are simply instruments;* persons to be used. We sometimes act as if all were by us and for us; the cause and object of all.

2. *Happy results will flow.*

(1.) We shall leave things *without undue pushing.* Do what is needful, and then have faith in truth that it will act by its own weight. Truth put in front, we shall retire avoiding undue prominence of ourselves, which often offends men and mars our work.

2. We shall leave our sayings and doings *for God to fructify.* Much has to be left before they will fructify; left to themselves and to God. As with the sower, seeds spring up "he knoweth not how."

(3.) *Restlessness of self is thus quieted;* we wait the order of events, not grasping an unripened harvest.

(4.) We must *not think God's affairs suffer* because we have to "go our way." When we have gone, *He remains.* Often the consciousness of having borne testimony is all we can attain to; all we can do; all we are required to do: we may "go our way."

IV. "Self" has a right place in service.

1. Our energies and faculties were *given to us for use.* Jesus could assert Himself: as in the Temple when He drove out the money-changers. Jeremiah returned, when his "yoke of wood" was broken, with a "*yoke of iron.*"

2. Yet, in all the energy which circumstances may require, *the action of mere human feeling need not be seen.* That which is truly for God will commend itself as such. Consecrated "self," taught by the Holy Ghost, will show that there is a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to keep silence as well as to speak, a time to act and testify, and also a time "*to go our way.*"—*Constructed and condensed from "Breviates," by Rev. P. B. Power, M.A.*

Ver. 13. *Theme:* THE TWO YOKES. "*Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast broken the yokes of wood, but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron.*"

Jeremiah taught by symbols: hid his mantle in the earth, broke earthen pot, &c. The preacher to-day would evoke harsh criticism if he ventured on any such symbolic action.

Opposition of false prophets assailed him. Always so. If there be a Christ, there will arise an Antichrist; if a Simon Peter, there will arise a Simon Magus; if a Luther, an Eckius. Yet the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Gospel, mighty though the sophistries of opponents be.

I. Men must wear some yoke. In every *stage* of life—childhood, youth, manhood; and in every *station* of life—servants, masters, &c.

1. God has made and sustains us, and asks that we *submit to His will.*

2. With our passions and propensities, if we break the yoke it is meet we should wear, and do not serve God, we at once bend our necks to another yoke and *serve slavishly our own selves.*

II. Christ's yoke is an easy one to wear. Only as a "yoke of wood."

1. The yoke of Christ is *a right one.* Serve Jesus Christ, and it is found that the Christian law is perfection itself.

2. The yoke of Christ is *framed in our interest.* To believe in Christ is the highest wisdom: to repent of sin is the most delightful necessity; to follow after holiness is the most blissful pursuit; to become a servant of Christ is to be made a king and priest unto God. His is a blessed life.

3. Christ's yoke is *not exacting.* He in His grace, always gives us of His bounty when He asks of us our duty. A sinner must *believe;* it is his own act; the Holy Spirit never believes for anybody, yet the Holy Spirit gives the faith which the man exercises towards God. He must *repent;* yet Christ is exalted to "give repentance."

4. It is *an easy yoke.* Never did a man wear it but he always loved to wear it. The life of a Christian is not chafed and galled by vexatious prohibitions. Though the duties of holiness are irksome to men who are not holy, grace makes the heart rejoice in it. See *Addenda:* "CHRIST'S YOKE EASY."

5. The *bright example of Christ* makes the yoke pleasant to bear. He Himself has carried the very yoke we bear, and we have blessed fellowship with Him in this. See *Addenda:* "CHRIST'S EXAMPLE."

6. All who have borne Christ's yoke have had *grace given equal to the weight of the burden.* Never heard a complaint of aged Christian against Christ or against His yoke. Wolsey regretted that he had not "served God with half the zeal he had served his king," but none has ever bewailed the zeal with which he followed Christ!

7. Christians who have borne this yoke always *desire to get their children into it.* They long that their sons also may serve the Lord. Often men say, "I do not want my sons to follow my

trade, it is wearying, its pay is small," &c.

III. Those who refuse Christ's easy yoke will have to wear a worse one. "Yokes of iron."

Adam wore an easy yoke in Paradise: he broke it, and himself and his posterity had to wear "*iron yokes*" ever since.

1. Turning from the right road, from the cry of rectitude, because it threatens shame or loss, will entail *vaster after-losses.*

2. *Backsliders*, by putting off the yoke of Christianity, have *not improved their condition.*

3. They who refuse the Bible and *follow tradition.* Do these perverts of the true Christian religion get an easier yoke? No; there are penances and mortifications, &c.

4. *The self-righteous* who attempt to work their own way to heaven. Self-righteousness is an iron yoke indeed.

5. *Unbelievers*, who will not believe the simple revelation of God, presently find themselves committed to systematic misbeliefs, which distract reason, oppress the heart, and trammel the conscience.

6. *Lovers of pleasure.* Pleasure often means lust, and gaiety means crime; and self-indulgence brings beggary and degradation.

In the last tremendous day of Christ's coming to judgment, the Christian's yoke will be as a chain of gold about his neck; but sin, pleasure, will be as an iron yoke, a burden of enslaving woe.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Ver. 15. *Theme:* TRUST PLACED IN LIES. "The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie."

I. Vastness of individual influence. "*Thou makest this people*," &c. For good or ill.

II. Dastardly cruelty of deception. Like the leading of unsuspecting children *along a flowery path to a precipice.* "Makest them trust in a *lie!*"

III. Perilous readiness to rely on fair words. Not merely to *listen*, or to *find pleasure* in hearing, but to "*trust.*" Man is stupidly incautious. The syren's song charms him, so he *trusts* her leading, goes after her even to death!

IV. Appalling arrogance of falsity "The Lord hath *not sent thee*, yet," &c. Without any Divine commission, nevertheless Hananiah assumed the airs and wielded the influence of a messenger of God.

V. Conflict of falsehood with truth. "Thou *makest* them trust in *a lie*, though the *Lord hath not* sent thee."

1. It was *war against the true word of God.*

2. It was *successful* conflict with truthful teaching.

3. It illustrates the *lying ministry which has been in all ages active.*

4. It shows the *hindrances amid which God's messengers* work.

Ver. 16. *Theme:* THE SOLEMN WARNING. "*This year thou shalt die.*"

That we must die is certain, but the hour is hid. Yet, if some prophet could open to us the Divine decrees, it is quite possible one or other of us would see this sentence.

I. Possibility of this event. This year we *may* die.

1. For our life is the greatest uncertainty in the world (James iv. 13, 14).

2. Because thousands have died the last year (Eccles. iii. 2, "a time to die").

3. Thousands will certainly die this year, and we may be of the number.

4. Though we be young; for the regions of the dead are crowded with those who have died in youth.

5. Though we have not finished our education.

6. Though we be in health and vigour.

7. Though we be full of business.

8. Though we be not prepared for it.

9. Though we deliberately delay preparation.

10. Though we be unwilling to admit the thought.

11. Though we may strongly hope the contrary.

12. Though we promise ourselves many years of pleasure (Luke xii. 19, 20).

II. Important consequences should we die this year.

1. If we die unpardoned, unrenewed.

we should be for ever cut off from the pleasures of this present life.

2. We shall have no pleasures to substitute for those we lose.

3. All our hopes, as to the present life, will for ever perish.

4. We shall be deprived for ever of all the means of salvation (Eccles. ix. 10).

5. All our hopes of heaven will eternally vanish (Prov. xi. 7).

To conclude—

i. How awful the thought of dying if we are yet in our sins! Let us use the interval for salvation.

ii. How pleasing the thought, and how happy the consequences, if we are believers in Christ, that eternal redemption is so near!—*Hannam*.

Theme: ON THE NEW YEAR. "*This year* thou shalt die."

The unexpected death of this false prophet is an instance of the extraordinary interposition of the Almighty. But the event holds lessons of universal extent and application—

i. That it is "in God we live and move and have our being."

ii. That the period of death of each individual is known to and appointed by Him.

Observe—

I. This sentence is doubtless expressive of the decision of God concerning many this year.

1. The page of history affords *no record of a single year* in which death desisted from his work of destruction, or the insatiable grave said, "It is enough." More than twenty millions die every year.

2. The *last year of many is now commenced*. The *aged;* bowed down with the weight of years, &c. In the *meridian of life*, though bound to earth by tenderest associations. Thousands in the *very morning of life*, though hearts beat high with hope, &c.

3. *Various are the means by which God's design will be executed:* through the failure of nature; sickness; accidents; after protracted illness; suddenly and without warning; retire at night to rest but called into eternity before morning; or leave their homes in the morning never more to return alive.

II. No individual can be certain that this does not express God's decision concerning himself.

1. Utterly impossible for us to know who are, or who are not, included in God's appointments.

2. The circumstances of some render it most probable that this year will be their last—the old, the infirm, &c.

3. Doubtless, those who think least of death, and confidently reckon on future years, will find this sentence fulfilled.

III. It is the duty and interest of all to use wisely the gracious hours they enjoy.

1. A solemn question arises: *What is it to die?* Not merely to cease from cheering scenes of earth, &c., but to pass from this state of being into the immediate presence of our Maker and Judge to "give account" (2 Cor. v. 10). It is to be *rewarded* (Rev. vii. 14) or doomed (Mark ix. 49).

2. Surely it is the duty of each to ask, *Am I prepared to die?* The word of God declares that "except ye *repent*," &c. (Luke xiii. 3); "that he who *believeth* not," &c. (Mark xvi. 16); that "without *holiness*," &c. (Heb. xvii. 14); that "except *born of the Spirit*," &c. (John iii. 5). Let each ask, Am I *thus* prepared?

3. Let this year be *commenced with earnest preparation*. Never can a more favourable opportunity present itself.—*J. Bunter*, A.D. 1828.

See *Addenda:* THE AVERAGE OF LIFE.

ADDENDA TO CHAP. XXVIII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 13. CHRIST'S YOKE EASY. Queen Elizabeth carried the crown in the procession of her sister Mary at the coronation, and she remarked that *it was very heavy;* but some one standing by told her it would not be heavy when she had to *wear it herself*. So the precepts which some men do but carry in their hands seem very heavy; but when a man comes to know Christ and

to love Him, those very precepts become light and easy.—*Spurgeon.*

A man shall carry a bucket of water on his head and be very tired of the burden; but the same man when he dives into the sea shall have thousands of buckets on his head without perceiving their weight, because he is *in the element* and it entirely surrounds him. The duties of holiness are very irksome to men who are not in the element of holiness; but when once those men are cast into the element of grace, then they bear ten times more and feel no weight, but are refreshed thereby with joy unspeakable.—*Spurgeon.*

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE. Have you never read in Grecian story how the Grecian soldiers on their long marches grew exceedingly weary, and wished that the war were closed, they felt so dispirited? But there was a man whom they almost adored as a god—Alexander himself, and they saw him always sharing their toil. If the road was rough, the monarch walked with them; if they were short of water, Alexander would share their thirst. At the sight of him every man grew strong. Oh! it is grand to the believer to feel that, if there be a trial or a difficulty in the Christian life, Christ has borne it, and Christ is with us bearing it still.

Ver. 16. THE AVERAGE OF LIFE. "*The average of life has altered.* If a man now lives a hundred years, we go miles to see him. There is but one apple where there were five blossoms. The sexton rings the bell merrily at first; at last he tolls it.

"Men in these days undergo suffering, and great wear and tear of brain and physical powers. Not one of the hundreds of the brainworkers use any moderation. Of *printers*, few ever live to fifty. The *watchmaker* shortens his own life as he measures the hours and minutes for others. The *chemist* breathes in death. The *shoemaker* wears out his life at the last. The *foundryman* breathes in filings. The *miller* breathes in dust as he toils at the grist. The *mason* digs his own grave with his trowel. What you do, do quickly; "*for this year thou shalt die.*"—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*, A.D. 1872.

The *past* is a dream,
The *future* a breath,
The *present* a gleam
From birth unto death.—*Oriental.*

"Men should strive to live well, not to live long."—*Earl of Stirling.*

"Then let us fill
This little interval, this pause of life,
With all the virtues we can crowd into it."
—*Addison.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. **Chronology of the Chapter.**—This letter and its transmission are usually dated the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign (because of chap. xxviii. 1), but ver. 2 of this chapter rather points to a somewhat earlier date, possibly the first or second year of Zedekiah; for Zedekiah himself had to go in his fourth year (chap. li. 59), and it is probable therefore that this embassy was a year or two earlier.

2. **Contemporary Scriptures.**—2 Chron. xxxvi. 14–21; Ezek. xvii. 11–21.

3. **National Affairs.**—An embassy sent from Zedekiah to the king of Babylon. Its object unknown; but not unlikely to carry the tribute he was under bond to pay Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chron. xxxvi. 13), and possibly to delude him by renewed pledges of obedience when he was conspiring, with the kings of other nations, to rebel against him (chap. xxvii. 3).

4. **Contemporaneous History.**—See notes on chap. xxi.

5. **Personal Allusions.**—Ver. 3. "*Elasah.*" Most probably brother of Ahikam (see note chap. xxvi. 24), and would consequently be favourably received at the Chaldean court. Ver. 4. "*Gemariah the son of Hilkiah.*" Hilkiah was the priest who found the law in the house of the Lord and showed it to Shaphan the scribe, who showed it to Josiah the king (2 Kings xxii. 8). Different person from the Gemariah of Jer. xxxvi. 25. Ver. 21. "*Ahab, son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah, son of Maaseiah.*" Two false prophets who traded upon the wishes and credulity of the Babylonian captives, provoking them to revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, and were therefore cast into the "burning fiery furnace" (comp. Dan. iii. 6). Ver. 24. "*Shemaiah the Nehelamite.*" This Shemaiah would seem to have been the leader of these false prophets at Babylon, for he wrote the letter in their name against Jeremiah. Ver. 25. "*Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah*" (see on xxi. 1). He was the "second priest," the *pakéd*, deputy "in the stead of Jehoiada the

priest" (ver. 26), and in this office he controlled the civil force which guarded the Temple. Ver. 26, "*Jehoiada the priest.*" Supposed by some to be the same conspicuous and influential Jehoiada of king Joash's reign (2 Kings xi. 15; 2 Chron. xxiii. 16); but as both Jehoiada and Zephaniah are in this verse called "officers in the house of the Lord," *i.e.*, *pakids*, deputy high-priests, the supposition falls.

6. Geographical References.—Ver. 24. "*The Nehelamite,*" *i.e.*, belonging to the village of *Nehlam.* A place of similar name existed somewhere between the Jordan and the Euphrates (comp. 2 Sam. x. 16, 17); called there the "Helam" or *Chelam*, and here *Ne-chelam.*

7. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 2. "*The queen.*" Nehushta, the queen-mother (comp. xii. 18). Ver. 11. "*An expected end.*" אַחֲרִית, lit., *last*, *i.e.*, issue or future—"a future and a hope." Ver. 12: "*Ye shall go and pray unto Me.*" Probably a Hebrew idiom for repeated and frequent prayer (Michaelis); but better, going to the place of prayer. Ver. 17. "*Like vile figs.*" The adjective comes from זָעַר, to *shudder.* Ver. 18. "*Deliver them to be removed:*" *vide* note on chap. xv. 4, p. 314. Though a different word from "vile," *shuddering*, there is a play on the sense of that word in the word rendered "removed" (ver. 18), "make them a *shuddering.*" Ver. 22. *A curse*, קְלָלָה. Another ringing on the form of words. This "curse," *kelalah*, should be associated with the conduct of "the son of *Kolaiah*" (ver. 21), קוֹלָיָה, whom Nebuchadnezzar "*roasted*" קָלָם, *kalam*, in the fire. Ver. 24. "*Nehelamite:*" in margin, *dreamer;* but this is an error, for the word (*vide* Geographical Reference above) is a name of a place, though it closely resembles the word *Chalam*, "dreamer," which Jeremiah so often uses (see ver. 8).

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XXIX.

A Revolutionary Epoch.

Zedekiah's was certainly an uneasy throne. At home the people were restless, the priests and princes eager to revolt. And in Babylon (to whose monarch he was tributary, and whither the flower of the Jewish nation had already been carried) the Chaldees were probably irritated, as the Romans were in later times, at the determination of the Jews never to submit quietly to a foreign rule; while, also, there was the same ferment among the Jews in Babylon as there was among those in Jerusalem. To quell this ferment among the exiles, he sent letters assuring them that the captivity would continue for seventy years, and urging them to settle down calmly and wisely, to make themselves homes, and give themselves to industry and commerce. His words found acceptance there, but the false prophets in Jerusalem did their utmost to thwart Jeremiah's aim, and to stir among the exiles resistance to his influence.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* Messages to Exiles. "Now these are the words of the letter Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the residue of the elders which were carried away captives."

This was a letter from Jeremiah to the captives and exiles, far from Jerusalem their happy home. They were then what we are now, strangers and pilgrims—exiles; and the directions given to them may be fitly applied by us. The captives would find very real consolations in this letter from the prophet whom God inspired to write it.

I. The very fact that a message was sent to them under an express Divine appointment was consolatory. And this may teach us that, wherever God's children are scattered, the written word is to them a source of permanent encouragement.

God looks after His afflicted and scattered servants. He moved the Apostles James and Peter to write Epistles to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. John, when banished from Ephesus to Patmos, was favoured with high revelations from God. During the seventy years' captivity, Daniel was raised up to be a living consolation to the exiles; and here Jeremiah is directed to write a letter to them by express command of God. This proves to us that in the severest ways of justice God does not forget His own children, but has in reserve ample consolations for them, when they lie under the common judgment.

A man would have thought that these were driven away from God's *care* when they were driven out from the sanctuary, but Ezekiel tells a different tale (Ezek. xi. 16): "*I will be a little sanctuary in all countries whither they come.*" They at Jerusalem, it seems, had the Temple, but without God; they at Babylon shall have God, but without the Temple. He applies seasonable comforts under discouraging providences, and is bent upon making up His jewels though they seem scattered and lost. God gives a command to Moab: "*Let Mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab.*"

II. The particular Providence of God, appearing on their behalf under all their calamities, was a source of consolation.

He is the *Lord of Hosts*, of all the armies above and below, and yet is the *God of Israel;* and though He permits their captivity, He does not break His relation to them—their covenant-God still, though under a cloud.

He assumes the active agency in their dispersion. "*I have caused them* to be carried away." Their sins were the *procuring* cause of their dispersion; Nebuchadnezzar was the *instrumental* cause, but God Himself was the *efficient and disposing cause.* "*Is there evil in the city and I have not done it?*" He asserts the strictness of His justice, visiting the sins of His own people upon them. Certainly it must be a great sin which induces a loving father to cast his child out of doors. But sin is a great *scatterer*, and is always followed by a driving away and a casting out. It drove the angels from heaven, Adam from Paradise, Cain from the boundaries of the visible Church, and the children of Israel from their much-loved dwellings in Zion. Your houses will be weary of you when you dishonour God in them, and you may live to be driven from those comforts which you abuse to excess.

Yet the fact of God's being the agent in their dispersion is referred to as a ground of consolation; since it reconciles us to our troubles to see the hand of God in them, and to trace an all-gracious and merciful design in them. "*I was dumb because Thou didst it.*" "*He that scattered Israel shall gather him.*"

III. The promise of the stability and security of their social and domestic interests was given. They were promised "peace in the peace of Babylon," and were forbidden to plot and intrigue against its political interests. They were not to be known as agitators, or ringleaders of revolt, but as peaceful citizens. And it is a fact that they were treated more like colonists than captives: "*He made them pitied of those who carried them captive.*" If they were to "pray for the peace" of Babylon, much more should we for the welfare of our own country.

The permanence and maintenance of their domestic interests were provided for. "*Build ye houses and plant gardens; take wives for your sons, that ye may be increased and not diminished.*" This is just contrary to God's command to Jeremiah (xvi. 3) in Jerusalem, because then the country was on the eve of convulsion, but now they were informed of a long captivity. Had God given the hope of speedy return, their minds would have been unsettled and uneasy; they would have applied to no business, taken no comfort; but they were given to calculate on long absence from home.

Scripture deals honestly by us. It tells us that through much tribulation we enter the kingdom. "In every place the Spirit *testifies that bonds and imprisonments await us.*" It tells us where comfort cannot be found, and where our peace is securely laid up: "*In Me ye shall have peace.*"

IV. The prospect of a certain and favourable issue to their trials.

"Thoughts of peace and not of evil" (ver. 11).—*S. Thodey*, A.D. 1834.

Ver. 2. JECONIAH'S CAPTIVITY. Nebuchadnezzar, in the first half of his reign (B.C. 606–562), repeatedly invaded Judea, besieged Jerusalem, carried away the inhabitants to Babylon, and destroyed the city and Temple. Two distinct deportations are mentioned in 2 Kings xxiv. 14 (including 10,000

persons), xxxv. 11; one in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 20, three in Jer. lii. 28–30 (including 4600 persons); and one in Dan. i. 3. The *two principal deportations* were—

i. That which took place B.C. 598, when Jehoiachim, with all the nobles, soldiers, and artificers were carried away; and

ii. That which followed the destruction of the Temple and the capture of Zedekiah, B.C. 588.—"*Captivities of the Jews*" (*Dr. Smith*).

Ver. 7. *Theme:* CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM. "*And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.*"

The case of these people does not exactly correspond with ours, but the difference should heighten our obligations. Ought we not to seek the good of our native land—the land of our fathers' sepulchres—the land where we are protected by mild and wholesome laws, where civil and religious freedom are enjoyed in a higher degree than in any other country in Europe; a land where God has been known for many centuries as a refuge; a land where there are greater opportunities for propagating the Gospel, at home and abroad, than in any other land under heaven?

I. Inquire into the duty of religious people towards their country. "*Seek the peace of the city.*" The word "peace" here means *prosperity in general.*

We should therefore seek our nation's *welfare.* Then—

1. We shall *do nothing*, and *join in nothing, that tends to disturb its peace or hinder its welfare; e.g.*, conspiracies, inflammatory speeches, sow discontent and disaffection, depreciate those who govern in a way so as to bring government into contempt.

2. *Do everything in our power to promote its welfare; e.g.*, a cheerful obedience to the laws, respect for those who frame and execute them, ready co-operation in beneficent measures.

3. *That we pray the Lord on its behalf.* Though banished from their Temple, these exiles had access to their God. All our *dependence, as a nation*, is upon God; and therefore we should importune Him. Further, there is *a load of guilt upon our country*, and we should therefore supplicate mercy on its behalf.

II. The motives by which these duties are enforced.

1. *The interests of individuals and families* are closely connected with those of a country.

2. Our interests as *Christians* are interwoven with the well-being of our country. What our advantages are we should know to our grief were we once to lose them.

3. Should the young be called upon to *take up arms* for our country's defence, every one of us, parent, wife, or friend, will (if we can pray for anything) *importune the Lord of hosts* to cover their heads in the day of battle.—*Rev. Andrew Fuller* (delivered at Kettering, in 1803, at a time of threatened invasion).

Theme: THE BEST CHRISTIANS THE BEST CITIZENS.

I. They know that the prosperity of the whole is their own prosperity. They do not, therefore, selfishly seek their own advantage.

II. They actually labour with all diligence for the furtherance of the common good.

III. They employ for this end the power of Christian prayer.—*Naegelsbach.*

Theme: THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS TO THEIR COUNTRY.

I. What are the things absolutely necessary to the security and prosperity, the true glory and happiness, of our country?

1. The true honour of a nation, like that of the individual, lies in *character.* President Quincy affirms: "Human happiness has no perfect security but freedom; freedom, none but virtue; virtue, none but knowledge; neither freedom nor virtue has any vigour or immortal hope except in the principles of the Christian faith and in the sanctions of the Christian religion."

2. The security and prosperity of our

nation are inseparably associated with the *advancement of religion* among the people.

II. What are the best means for securing those things which are essential to our country's highest welfare?

1. General diffusion of *education*. "Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army."

2. Equally essential that the people be *virtuous*. Knowledge is power, but unsanctified power is power for evil.

3. The general *distribution of the Bible*. The Bible is the great instrument for enlightening the conscience and purifying the heart.

4. *Preaching the Gospel*. Our nature is a wreck, a chaos, which the cross of Christ alone can adjust.

5. *Prayer*. See 2 Chron. vii. 13, 14; Ps. cvi. 23; Exod. xxxii. 10, &c. John Knox, the great Scottish reformer, prayed—"Give me Scotland, or else I die." Queen Mary said she feared his prayers more than an army of 10,000 men! (See *Addenda:* PRAYER FOR ONE'S OWN COUNTRY.)

III. What arguments may enforce the duties of personal and combined activity in seeking the highest good of our land?

1. Because our *own individual good* is intimately connected with its general happiness and prosperity. "For in the peace thereof ye shall have peace."

2. We shall thereby *recommend the religion we profess*.

3. The work of supplying our land with the preached Gospel and with religious institutions is *the most important work to which Christians* can devote their energies. — *Rev. Samuel Baker, D.D., Philadelphia*, 1864.

Vers. 8, 9. DECEIVING PROPHETS. See on chap. xiv. 14; xxiii. 21; xxvii. 14, 15.

Vers. 10–14. *Theme:* GRACIOUS PURPOSES OF GRIEVOUS PUNISHMENTS. In the text four things:—The certain punishment of sin. The certain fulfilment of God's gracious purposes. The certain issue of sanctified afflictions. The certain acceptance of fervent devotions.

I. **The certain punishment of sin.** "After seventy years be accomplished in Babylon I will visit you." But *seventy years must be accomplished*. And mark, this threatening was fulfilled towards the most pious of God's people among the Jews, as well as the most impious. "*One event happeneth to all.*" "*The soul that sinneth,*" &c.

The blood of Christ, applied by faith, delivers from the curse of sin hereafter, but the consequences of sin are often bitterly felt by God's people here. It is the law of Divine dispensations that sin should bring sorrow; and it is the tendency of Divine grace to make *sin appear exceeding sinful*. Job and David and Hezekiah and Peter, even though through rich grace their sins were forgiven and their hopes were restored, found that it was "an evil thing and bitter to sin against God;" and in the text the pious Jews equally with their irreligious countrymen endured captivity in Babylon seventy years.

As the shadow follows the body, so does anguish attend upon sin. We may advance towards sin with pleasure in our eye, but when we return it is with sorrow and repentance in our heart.

II. **The certain fulfilment of God's gracious purposes.** "I will visit and perform My good word. For I know the thoughts," &c. The "*good word*" was the word of *promise* of deliverance from captivity, and the coming and reign of Christ.

It is the mercy of the penitent sinner, it is the comfort of the humblest believer, that God is as true to His promises as to His threatenings—as faithful to the declarations of the covenant of His grace as He is to the sentence of His holy law—as ready to listen to the voice of the blood of sprinkling as He was to listen to the voice of the blood of Abel. God will perform His good word to the humblest spirit that has sought and found rest at the foot of the cross. No sin will be our ruin which leads us to Christ for salvation. It is His own language. "*I, even I, am He,*" and "*Come now, and let us reason.*"

"*I know the thoughts — thoughts of peace.*" God often thinks thoughts of peace, when we suppose He thinks thoughts of evil. He occupies Himself in merciful thoughts concerning their spiritual peace of mind now and their eternal peace hereafter.

The issue is to give you "*an expected end*" — a very desirable one. "*The Lord will perfect that which concerneth;*" "*But the God of all grace,*" &c.

APPLY IT TO CHRIST, the expected Messiah, in whom all God's thoughts of peace concerning His people issue. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all things. Of all things in *creation;* "for all things were made by and for Him." All things in *Scripture:* prophecies, promises, types, ceremonies, sacrifices, "*the end of the law.*" *Salvation by Christ* now and happiness with Christ hereafter is the end of all God's gracious purposes and designs—the end of the *covenant of grace*—the end of God's *providential dispensations*—and the end of the *toils and conflicts of the Christian life.* It is an end, an issue, contemplated by faith, and *waited for* by believers; "*an expected end,*" "*receiving the end of your faith,*" &c. And it is freely bestowed—thankfully received—as a grace-gift. "*By grace ye;*" "*I will perform My good word;*" "*Heaven and earth may pass away,*" &c.

III. **The certain issue of sanctified afflictions** (ver. 12). "Then shall ye call and go and pray, and I will hearken." We cannot have a better proof of sanctified afflictions than when a spirit of prayer is poured out—when we are brought to our knees — taught the futility of broken dependencies—taught to find our happiness and all in God. Distrust of ourselves—dependence on Christ—confidence in God—humility in His presence—submission to His will—and a delight in communion with Him—these mark growth in grace.

IV. **The certain acceptance of fervent prayer.** "Seek and find Me . . . whole heart" (ver. 13). True of forgiveness of sin—support in trouble—deliverance. We must be earnest and fervent, or shall have but a cold answer. He that asks with a doubting mind and wavering lazy desire, begs for nothing but to be denied. God gives His people what they ask, or better. We beg for removal of present sadness — but He gives that which makes us able to bear twenty sadnesses, a cheerful spirit, peaceful conscience, joy in God, the antepast of eternal rejoicings in His kingdom. Remember how great a God you go to, how great a need you have, how great a thing you pray for.—*S. Thodey,* A.D. 1827.

Ver. 11. *Theme:* GOD'S GRACIOUS THOUGHTS.

Near disasters clearly realised (ver. 10); yet future good confidently anticipated. As God would be in their calamities, for He will punish sin, so He designed their deliverance, for "He will not always chide, neither keep His anger for ever."

I. **The Lord has "thoughts" concerning His people.** Yes! "Thoughts of peace and not of evil." "How *precious* also are Thy *thoughts!*" True: for "as the heavens are high above the earth, *so are Thy thoughts* above our thoughts," &c. So then—

i. The Most High *bows* to the things done upon the earth. Yes, and further: He *forms intentions* respecting them. And specially: He attentively regards *mankind* to *divide between His people* and their adversaries; discerns between our struggles, alarms, prayers, tears, &c., and the scorn and oppression of those hostile to us.

ii. He *thinks* about us! Is not indifferent, but intently concerned; our case occupies His thoughts. Benevolent people will *give* to the poor, but *not think* about the pleader. But God takes us up into His "thoughts." "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord *thinketh upon me!*"

1. God has "thoughts" of our *present condition.* "Remembers us in our low estate."

2. "Thoughts," too, of our *coming calamities* (ver. 10). "In the world ye shall have tribulation," &c.

3. But "thoughts" also of our *future deliverance and happiness.*

II. **The Lord's thoughts will be**

wrought out into accomplishment. These thoughts of God were—

a. Unrecognised by His people's foes. They act as if we were friendless. God is not in their thoughts.

b. Unhindered by the world's designs. What foes intend against us, and may do, does not alter nor impede God's designs.

1. God's "thoughts" were *not known to us* till we were enlightened. His messengers taught, but "we would not hear."

2. How then should aliens know the thoughts of God? Even "the *servant* knoweth not what his lord doeth;" how should foes? "The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God," &c.

III. Adversaries know not against what Divine "thoughts" and intentions they strive. When they would *injure* us; "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." Often they *conspire against* us; but "if this thing be not of God it cannot stand." Gladly would hostile powers *condemn* us; but "who is he that condemneth? Christ hath died, yea, rather is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God."

Remember how "*Satan* stood at God's right hand to resist" *Joshua;* and the Lord answered, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan," &c.

Think of Balaam, whom Balak would have to *curse* Israel: "How can I curse whom God hath blessed?"

1. *It cannot be done.* Adversaries intend ruin; but *God has preceded their malice by His gracious designs!* Human passion cannot reverse the Divine purpose.

2. *God's "thoughts" shall stand.* He thinks of us *with love;* and "I am persuaded nothing shall separate us from the love of God," &c. He intends *our redemption:* and "whom He called, them justified, glorified." He means, we shall have a *glad future:* and "Because I live ye shall live also."

Hints: THOUGHTS OF PEACE. We must *wait* for their realisation; for the Lord *delays* this, but does not *forget* it.—*Naegelsbach.*

"Whereupon is our *hope of peace based?*

1. Objectively upon this, that the Lord Himself has thoughts of peace concerning us.

2. Subjectively on this, that we (*a*) call upon and seek the Lord with all our hearts, (*b*) patiently wait for a time of hearing."—*Naegelsbach.*

"The moral malady of man is twofold: at one time *vain confidence*, then, when that is disappointed, *despair.* So the Jews first laughed at God's threats, confident that they should speedily return; then, when cast down from that confidence, they sank into inconsolable despondency."—*Jamieson.*

Ver. 12. "*Ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you.*" Fulfilled Dan. ix. 3, &c. When God designs mercy, He puts it into the hearts of His people to pray for the mercy designed. When such a spirit of prayer is poured out it is a sure sign of coming blessings.

Ver. 13. *Theme:* GOOD NEWS FOR TRUE SEEKERS. Some lament they have been seeking God for months, but are still unable to praise Him. But always conclude that if a particular promise of God does not turn out true to you, there is something in you to hinder it.

I. The quality required in every true seeker. It is *wholeheartedness:* "Search for Me with all your heart." In order to this there must be

1. *An undivided object in the seeker's mind.* "Ye shall seek *Me* and find *Me* when ye shall search for *Me*," &c. Yes; "Oh that I knew where I might find *Him!*" Shake off all attention to *self.* No reservation must be made for the gratification of *pride.*

2. "With all thy heart" means *with the entire faculties of our being.* Rouse thy *understanding.* Use *memory* and *conscience.* Bring thy *will* into the effort.

3. It mainly signifies *aroused energy.* Getting out of that dull, sluggish, indifferent spirit which is so common; being resolute, importunate.

II. The reasons for this wholeheartedness being required

1. In *every other pursuit*, where the object is at al. worthy of a man's efforts, wholeheartedness is required.

2. The *danger from which we need to escape* is so great that the utmost earnestness is none too much.

3. Look, moreover, at *the greatness of the mercy* thou art seeking.

4. *Everybody else is in earnest*: Satan, to ruin thee; Christ, to save thee, &c.

5. You have been wholehearted enough *in the ways of sin.*

6. How can there be *anything true about your seeking* if it be not wholehearted?

7. *That which you seek*, if you obtain it, *is a wholehearted thing.*

8. The believer's *obedience* is wholehearted (Ps. cxix. 69).

III. Hindrances to a wholehearted search.

1. *Presumption.* "Because God wants us saved, we need not make much effort." Or, "Salvation is so simple, any day will do to attend to it," &c.

2. *Remaining self-confident.* They think there is at least a little good about themselves.

3. *Despair.* Some do not believe you can be forgiven, &c.

4. The *conduct of Christian professors.*
—*C. H. Spurgeon*, A.D. 1876.

Compare Homilies on chap. xxiv. 7.

Ver. 14. GATHERING THE EXILES HOME. See on chap. iv. 1; xxiii. 3; xxiv. 5.

Vers. 15–19. Comp. xxiv. 8–10; xvii. 13, &c.

Ver. 22. "*Whom Nebuchadnezzar roasted in the fire.*"

Daniel's record of the punishment threatened against all who refused to "worship the image Nebuchadnezzar the king set up," is that "whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace" (Dan. iii. 6).

"Here was the warrant for that iniquitous barbarity—the *burning of heretics.* It originated in Babylon. 'The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire.' It is, at least, impressive to recall how *Rome* used this same hateful and hellish weapon of vengeance, and that too for the same godless purpose, namely, to *subject the souls of men to her idolatry*, burning as heretics those who refused to worship her image; thus emphatically identifying herself with the 'Babylon' whose cruelty and sins the Apocalypse portrays, and against whom the most solemn curses of Heaven are pronounced."—*Crowds of the Bible* (pp. 55, 56), *by Rev. W. H. Jellie.*

Ver. 24, *seq.* JEREMIAH'S SECOND LETTER TO THE EXILES. The messengers (ver. 3) of the first letter brought back a strong protest from the false prophet Shemaiah directed to Zephaniah, condemnatory of Jeremiah for pronouncing the captivity "long" (ver. 28), and reproving the authorities for their supineness in not apprehending him, urging Zephaniah to put him "in prison and in the stocks" (ver. 27).

Zephaniah, instead of lending himself to be the instrument of their rage, showed the letter to Jeremiah (ver. 29).

Whereupon Jeremiah again wrote the exiles, "the word of the Lord," in which Shemaiah was denounced as—

1. *Falsely assuming to be Jehovah's prophet* (ver. 31).

2. *Misleading the credulous hopes of the exiles*, "causing them to trust in a lie." For which crime there is prophesied—

1. *Punishment from God upon himself and his seed.*

2. *Complete extinction of his family line*, "because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord." See on chap xxviii. 16.

ADDENDA TO CHAP. XXIX.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 7. PRAYER FOR ONE'S OWN COUNTRY. John Knox used to be in such agony for the deliverance of his country that he could not sleep. He had a place in his garden where he used to go to pray. One night he and several friends were praying together, and, as they prayed, Knox spoke, declar

ing that deliverance had come. He explained that he could not tell what had happened, but he felt sure that in some way their prayers had been answered. And the next news informed them that their enemy, Mary Queen of Scotland, was dead.

At one time during the Lutheran reformation, soon after the conference of Augsburg in 1530, when the Reformer's cause looked mournful, Melancthon, with Luther and other divines, met to consult about the situation; and, after spending some time in prayer to God, Melancthon was suddenly called out of the room, from which he retired heavily depressed. While absent he saw several elders of the reformed churches with their parishioners and families; and many, young and old, were in prayer for the triumph of their cause. He re-entered the room with a joyous countenance, which astonished Luther, who inquired, "What now has happened to you, Philip, that you are become so cheerful?" "Oh, sirs," replied Melancthon, "let us not be discouraged, for I have seen our noble protectors, and such as, I will venture to say, will prove invincible against every foe." "And pray," returned Luther, thrilling with surprise and pleasure, "who and where are these powerful heroes?" "Oh," said Melancthon, "they are the wives of our parishioners and their little children, whose prayers I have just witnessed—prayers which I am satisfied our God will hear; for as our Heavenly Father and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has never despised our supplications, we have reason to trust that He will not in the present alarming crisis." The event proved that Melancthon was not mistaken. God heard their prayers.—*Cox's "Life of Melancthon."*

CHAPTER XXX.

Critical and Exegetical Notes.—**Chronology of the Chapter.**—Though without a date, yet the probability is that it was "*written in a book*" (see ver. 2) in the tenth year of Zedekiah; and that this date [given at the head of chap. xxxii.] applies to the four chapters, xxx. to xxxiii. inclusive. But it is open to dispute whether the prophecies contained in chapters xxx. and xxxi. were not delivered at a considerably earlier date. Naegelsbach dates these two chapters as "the oldest part of the whole book" of Jeremiah; and, carefully comparing their subject-matter with the prophecies of chapters iii.–vi., declares that their correspondence, "both in general and in particular," fixes them as belonging to "the same period;" specially pointing out that the absence of all mention of the *Chaldeans*, and the use of the early indefinite phrase, "the north country" (xxxi. 8), "is a sure sign of its composition before the fourth year of Jehoiakim." *Vide* **Chronological Notes** on chaps. iii. and vii. Also same references for **Contemporary Scriptures, National Affairs,** and **Contemporary History.**

Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 5. "*For thus* saith the Lord;" rather, "*Surely* thus," &c. "*Of fear and not of peace;*" of "fear and no peace."

Vers. 10, 11. "*Therefore fear thou not,*" to end of ver. 11, are omitted by the LXX., Hitzig, Movers, and Kuenen, and regarded as an interpolation from chap. xlvi. 27, 28.

Ver. 11. "Correct thee *in measure:*" "in justice," *vide* x. 24.

Ver. 13. "*Bound up: healing medicines.*" The verse, more correctly punctuated and rendered, may read thus: "None undertakes thy case to heal thee; for binding thy wounds, healing-plaister thou hast none."

Ver. 15. "*Thine affliction:*" thy breach. "*For* the multitude," &c.; rather, "*Because of* the greatness of thine iniquity, *because* thy sins are innumerable," &c.

Ver. 18. "Her own *heap:*" תֵּל, *elevation, mound,* specially of ruins; it may refer to the city *heap of ruins.* "*And the palace shall remain:*" rather, "*be inhabited.*" "*After the manner thereof;*" *i.e.,* with suitable splendour.

Ver. 21. "*And their nobles shall be of themselves.*" An important alteration necessary. Both אַדִּיר and כּוֹשְׁכִי refer to one person, and is here described as "their *Glorious One*" and "their *Ruler.*" Further, He is "to draw near and approach unto Me;" a phrase distinctively used of *one in the priestly office* (Exod. xix. 22; Lev. xxi. 21). Yet more, it is asked as in wonder, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me?" and should read, "Who is *He* that hath *pledged* His heart," &c.; *i.e.,* that hath risked His life in the daring approach; for *death* sealed that action (Numb. viii. 19). The combination of these qualities—"*Glorious One and Ruler,*" *priestly* approach to God; and *exposure of His very life* in His zeal for His people;—all this points to none other than the Person and ministry of **the Messiah.**

SURVEY OF CHAPTERS XXX. AND XXXI.

THE GLORIOUS FUTURE OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AT THE END OF DAYS.

I. GENERAL THEME. XXXI. 3.

II. THE DELIVERANCE OF ENTIRE ISRAEL, XXX. 4–22.

1. The great day of judgment for the world and deliverance of Israel, XXX. 4–11.
2. The turn of affairs: Jevovah for the chastised against the chastisers, XXX. 12–17.
3. The consummation of salvation, XXX. 18–22.

III. THE SPECIAL DISTRIBUTION OF SALVATION TO THE TWO DIVISIONS OF THE NATION. XXXI. 1–22.

A. *Ephraim's* share—

1. The decree of restoration, XXXI. 1–6.
2. The execution, XXXI. 7–14.
3. The threefold turn, XXXI. 15–22.

B. *Judah's* share—

The blessing of the sanctuary, XXXI. 23–26.

IV. THE ENTIRE RENEWAL, XXXI. 27–40.

1. The new life, XXXI. 27–30.
2. The new covenant, XXXI. 31–40.

—*Naegelsbach* in *Lange.*

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XXX.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* GOD'S MESSAGE IN WRITING. "*Write thee all the words which I have spoken to thee in a book.*" This was in distinction from messages *in speech*—oral prophecy.

I. Written words travel farther than spoken. *Absent ones*—Israel scattered abroad—*were to receive it;* as well as Judah, who was within the hearing of Jeremiah's voice. The prophecy could not reach them unless copies were distributed in the different countries wherein they were dispersed.

II. Written words are preserved better than spoken.

1. In their *exactness.* Not a jot or tittle falls. But *memory* might let some items fail if left unwritten.

2. In their *entirety.* Hearers only gather half, or fractions, of a message.

3. In their *significance.* Words of vast meaning require to be studied to see all their suggestiveness; and for this the "book" is best.

III. Written words fulfil a more enduring ministry than spoken. These "words" were—

1. *For every nation and age:* having a spiritual purport and universal value.

2. And they would, if written, prove a *monument to prophetic veracity.* This would strengthen the *faith* and *assure the hearts* of God's people in every emergency.

IV. Written words fill a sphere which spoken cannot reach.

1. They go into *privacy,* for meditation.

2. Into scenes of *banishment* and *affliction* and *sorrow,* for comfort.

3. Into *despised* and *neglected scenes,* where none would expect to find interested hearers, carrying light and hope to the abandoned and despairing.

As the people went into exile, they could carry these words of Jeremiah with them to be their consolation and strength amid coming distress and trial

Ver. 3. *Theme:* EXILES RESTORED. Comp. on chap. xvi. 15, &c., and xxiv. 6. Specially see Sectional Treatment of chap. iii. pp. 58 to 60 *supra.* Also see on iv. 31

Vers. 5, 6. *Theme:* CONSTERNATION OF THE GUILTY. Comp. Sectional Homily on vi. 18–26, pp. 120, 121, and on vi. 22–26, p. 133. Also Homily on chap. xxii. 20–23, *Hastening Desolations.*

Ver. 7. *Theme:* THE GREAT DAY. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none

is like it." The day of judgment for the world: "none like it." For it will be—

I. *A day of anxiety and terror for all the world.*

II. *A day of deliverance from distress for the children of God.*

III. *A day of realisation of all the happiness set in prospect before us.*—*Naegelsbach.*

Ver. 7. *Theme:* DELIVERANCE FROM TROUBLE. "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

Bacon has magnificently remarked of some of the PROPHECIES of Scripture that they have "*springing and germinant accomplishment*, throughout many ages, though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age." This is true of many of the prophecies concerning the Jews; for though many of them were fulfilled in their ancient captivities, they still continue to be fulfilled in their present dispersion.

But what is true of the prophecies is eminently true of the PROMISES of Scripture—they have a springing and germinant accomplishment. They are framed with such an exquisite knowledge of human nature, and so accurately accord with the principles of the Divine government, which are the same in every age, that they are adapted to all the circumstances in which Christians can be placed, and receive a distinct fulfilment in the history of each individual believer. Thus, "*instead of the fathers are the children.*" As the troubles of God's people are similar, so the supports they enjoy are similar—they are identical—and the deliverances of one age form the hope and consolation of all. "*It is even the time,*" &c.

I. It is a part of God's merciful dispensations that they endure trouble.

II. It is equally so that they should be supported in and delivered from it.

I. It is a part of God's merciful dispensations that they should be called to endure trial. Like their Lord, they must expect to be made acquainted with grief; and like Jacob, in the text, they must expect to have their time of trouble.

It is a part of God's dispensation; for "trouble does not spring from the dust." *Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?* And it is a part of God's merciful dispensation, however oppositely it may appear to us; "*for He doth not afflict willingly.*"

Every season of life, and every period of the Christian's life, has its trouble.

1. The time of *conversion* is a time of Jacob's trouble. He goes forth weeping. Sorrow for sin is real sorrow; doubts of his acceptance and fears of his rejection often fill him with dejection and alarm, and he says, "*Oh, that I knew,*" &c. But there is a balm for his sorrow, there is a remedy for his grief: "He shall be saved out of it," by looking to the cross. "*Yea, he wept; he found Him in Bethel.*"

2. The time of *spiritual dejection*, and darkness, and disconsolation, is a time of Jacob's trouble. This is sometimes produced by consciousness of sin, without sufficient apprehension of the power and willingness of Christ to save, sometimes by *distrust*, sometimes by neglect of duties, sometimes by a constitutional tendency to gloom and despondency; but, from whatever cause arising, it is often difficult to bear. David found it so when he said, "*Hath God forgotten?*" &c.; and Hezekiah when he said, "*I shall go softly all my years;*" and Daniel when *he ate no pleasant bread;* and Jonah when he said, "*I am cast out.*" yet, "he shall be saved out of it;" "*I have seen his ways and will heal;*" "*He that walketh in darkness,*" &c.

3. The time of *worldly perplexities* and disappointments—cares, anxieties, vexations, reproaches, are the Christian's lot here; losses in business, domestic grievances, straitened circumstances, actual poverty, are the means which God employs to teach the Christian this is not his rest, to draw off his mind from the vanity of life, and to teach him that his final hope must be in God. What was true of Israel is true of us: "God led them by the *right way.*" We know it was not the shortest way, nor the smoothest, but it was *the right way.* And God leads His people still in those paths best adapted to try character, to

develop principle, to promote sanctity of spirit and spirituality of mind. "*By these things*," says Hezekiah, "*men live, and in all these things are the life.*" Every one has his trial fitted to his state of mind.

(*a.*) Some have a resolute, independent, self-willed spirit. God suffers them to be wounded with reproach, to suffer with the scourge of tongues, and chastens them with the rod of men; or they are wasted with disease and visited with strong pain.

(*b.*) Some are ambitious, and aspiring, and sanguine, and given to enterprise; but as they climb, so they fall. God unravels their schemes, breaks up their plots and purposes, advances them to poverty, and feeds them with the bread of tears. Why all this? Was it to ruin them? No; but to save them from ruin.

(*c.*) Others fix their affections too deeply upon the creature, upon the smile of friends, the love of parents, the endearments of family connections. God removes these to bring them nearer to Himself. They are afflicted in the creature, and the time of *their trouble* is the time in which they witness the sorrows of those they love.

4. The time of *death* is the time of Jacob's trouble.

II. Whatever their calamity, they shall be supported in it, carried through it, delivered from it. They have always a Resource; the Arm that upholds the universe upholds them; the Wisdom that ordains the trial guides and guards them through it. The irreligious has no refuge, no tower, but "*the name of the Lord is*," &c. Every creature hath a retiring-place: the conies the rocks, the lion his den; the foxes have holes and the birds nests, but the wicked no hiding-place.

God is your friend. His character is your hope; His promises your security; His heaviest chastisements are your encouragements.

1. What He has *said to others* He says to you: "*Fear not, Abram;*" "*I am God all-sufficient;*" "*I will not leave.*"

2. What He has *done for others* He will do for you.

3. What He has *already done* for you and yours should warrant hope: "delivered in six troubles."—*Rev. S. Thodey*, A.D. 1824.

On verse 7. For *similar themes*, see on chap. xvii. 17, "*The Soul's Hope in the Time of Terror;*" and chap. xxiii. 6, "*A Bright Era for Mankind.*"

Comments—

The partial deliverance at the downfall of Babylon prefigures the final and complete deliverance of Israel, literal and spiritual, at the downfall of mystical Babylon (Rev. xviii. 19).—*Jamieson.*

The day of restoration is contrasted with the day of destruction. "In that day" the yoke of Babylon, which Jeremiah had symbolised by his own act, at God's command (xxviii. 2-12), will be broken from the neck of Judah; and this phrase, "that day," doubtless, is to be extended, in a larger sense, to the day of Christ's coming, when all Israel would be delivered from a worse yoke than that of Babylon. Comp. Isa. x. 27; Ezek. xxxiv. 27.—*Wordsworth.*

Vers. 8, 9. *Theme:* SLAVERY EXCHANGED FOR SERVICE. "Strangers shall no more hold him in servitude (Henderson's rendering), but they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them."

I. Tyranny rules over men with grievous severity. "Yoke" and "bonds" are symbols of despotic oppression.

1. *National and political despotism;* its iron-handed and iron-hearted government.

2. *Ecclesiastical and spiritual despotism;* its usurpation of all natural relationships, social ties, and religious liberties.

Note.—The shameful *selfishness* which prompts despotism, "*serve themselves* of him;" for greed of power, delight in securing abject submission, spoliation of possessions, &c., are the lust of all tyrants over the lives or souls of men.

II. Liberty unbridled will prove no special advantage even to its possessor. "If all "yokes" are gone and "bonds" broken from men, without any healthful control being substituted, men would become furious, victims of their own passions and self-will.

1. *Liberty from tyranny* is an advantage

only *when the control of God is substituted and accepted* in its stead, *e.g.*, "They shall *serve the Lord* their God," &c.

2. This *subjection to God is better and safer* than all human government and rule. It is a guarantee of good when God becomes our Governor, to rule us and care for our safety.

III. Divine rule is exercised through the kingship of Christ. "Serve the Lord their God and *David their king.*"

1. *God will not govern otherwise than by His Son.* Rejecting Him as "king,"—Him whom God has set over us, and by whom God would have us governed—we shall be rejected by God. It is not God's intention to rule us directly, without the mediation of His Son. We must therefore obey Christ, and thus serve God.

2. *It is in the way of Jesus that this promise is fulfilled.* David was dead when Jeremiah wrote, he never lived again to rule, yet God promised to perpetuate David's throne; but no king ever rose subsequent to this prophecy to rule the nation. Zerubbabel only held a fleeting and precarious dignity; and only Christ has realised and fulfilled this promise. But Jesus does rule—"*the King of saints*"—and blessed are they that serve Him.

IV. All our gracious liberty in Christ must be traced to God. "Whom I will raise up unto them."

1. We must rejoice in Christ's kingship *as God's gift of grace to us.*

2. Christ, and all blessings which flow to us in Him, must be viewed as the *outflow of God's great goodness to us.* "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son."

Ver. 10. *Theme:* RECOVERY OF LOST ISRAEL. See Homilies indicated under ver. 3 of this chapter; also see Topic, *Recovery of the Lost Ten Tribes*, chap. xxxiii. 8, on pp. 458, 459.

On "*He shall return, and be in rest, and be quiet,*" see Homily on chap. xxiii. 1–4.

Ver. 11. *Theme:* NATIONS OBLITERATED; ISRAEL PRESERVED. "A full end of all nations, yet not a full end of thee."

We have here ocular proof of prophecy accomplished in an instance without parallel. It was repeatedly foretold, both in the Old and New Testaments, that, for the rejection and murder of their Messiah, the Jews should be dispersed into all the countries; yet that they should not be lost and swallowed up among their conquerors, but should still subsist, to latest times, a distinct people. By Jeremiah God declared "He would make an end of all nations," their oppressors, "but He would not make an end of them." It cannot be said this prediction was written since the event; and certainly an occurrence more singular, or improbable, could not have been predicted. In the course of human affairs, who hath heard such a thing? Yet so it is. The *mighty monarchies* of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome are *vanished like the shadows* of the evening, or the phantoms of the night. Their places know them no more. Nothing remains of them but their names. Whilst *this little despised people*, strangely secure, without a friend or protector, amidst the wreck of empires, oppressed, persecuted, harassed always, by edict and executioners, by murders and massacres, have outlived the very ruins of them all. "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." Behold, then, a sign and wonder: *the accomplishment of prophecy is a standing miracle.* Contemplate the sight as it deserves, and be not faithless but believing.—*Bishop Horne.*

"NOT MAKE A FULL END OF THEE." See on chap. iv. 27; v. 18.

Also for *Theme:* LENIENT CORRECTION: "I will correct thee in measure," &c. See chap. x. 24.

Vers. 12–15. *Theme:* FAITHLESS HEALERS AND VAIN REMEDIES. On—

"*Bruise incurable,*" see viii. 22; also xvii. 9.

"*Wound is grievous,* see x. 19; xiv. 17; xv. 18.

"*No healing,*" see vi. 14; viii. 11; xv. 18.

"*All thy lovers have forgotten thee,*" see iii, 1; iv. 30; xxii. 20, 22; xxvii. 3.

"*Thy sins are increased,*" see v. 6.

I. Helpless: "Incurable;" "wounds grievous," ver. 12.

II. Hopeless: "None to plead;" "no healing medicines," ver. 13.

III. Deserted by man: "Lovers have forgotten thee; seek thee not," ver. 14.

IV. Smitten by God: "Wounded thee;" "chastised thee," ver. 14.

V. Justly suffering: "For the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins are increased," ver. 14.

VI. Rejected outcries: "Why criest thou," &c., ver. 15.

VII. Sins' woes: "Because *sins—I have done these* things unto thee."

VIII. Remedy implied: Cease *sins* and escape their doom.

Ver. 13. *Theme:* HEALING MEDICINES. "Thou hast no healing medicines." Doctors abound who undertake the cure of souls; but they heal not their maladies. "Ye are physicians of no value."

I. There are healing medicines adapted to heal all the maladies of the sin-stricken soul. Though "thou *hast* them *not*," yet such there are!

1. *They are found in Christ.* "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

2. *There are none besides.* Though professed spiritual healers offer other remedies, they have "no *healing* medicines," if they offer aught else but what the Gospel offers.

II. There are cruel delusions practised. By priests and ministers of the sanctuary, who *flatter themselves* that they have effected a cure, and *deceive their patients.* "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Who are these?—

1. Teachers of the *confessional* abominations.

2. Teachers of the *baptismal regeneration* fallacies.

3. Those who administer the *Lord's Supper to the dying* as a means of peace with God.

4. Preachers of *self-reliance and self-righteousness* for salvation.

It is one thing to deaden a pain, another to heal a wound!

III. For mourners over sin there is efficient healing. On no other truth can there be explained—

1. *The angels' joy* over penitent sinners.

2. *The Saviour's gladness* in reclaiming the guilty.

3. *The remonstrances of Scripture* over the unhealed (chap. viii. 22).

4. The assurance of the *blessedness following true sorrow.* "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted."

Ver. 16. *Theme:* IF GOD'S PEOPLE SUFFER, SHALL HIS FOES ESCAPE? "Therefore all that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity," &c.

I. *Though evil men seem now to prevail against Israel,* their day of woe is coming.

II. *Though God may use our adversaries for our chastisement because we sin,* they shall bear the iniquity and punishment of their deeds.

III. *Though for a while the judgment of God spares the wicked while afflicting the righteous,* yet the very afflictions of His people are a prophecy and guarantee that the heavier woes pronounced against the guilty will in due time fall on them.

IV. *Though mercy rules the afflictions of God's people, softening their sorrows, and working all for their good,* judgment without mercy shall sweep down on "every one" of God's and His people's adversaries.

V. *Though from the "devourer," the "captivity," and the "spoil," there will be sure escape for banished Israel,* yet from the doom coming upon the foes of God and Israel there shall be no alleviation or escape.

Ver. 19. *Theme:* HOW GOD REGARDS THE TREATMENT SHOWN TO THE JEWS. "This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after."

Was man justified in despising them, because they were under chastisements from an offended God? Though the Jews were the authors of their own misery,

the contempt poured upon them by their adversaries He will punish.

I. *What is* the treatment almost universally shown to the Jewish people? The historic view of the conduct of different nations specially since their dispersion by the Romans.

Cruelties inflicted upon them by different potentates of Europe, not excepting those of our own country. Cite, in example, the clamour raised throughout our land against the Act for removing Jewish disabilities. Nor is this *civic* intolerance all: their *religious interests* are disregarded and neglected.

The serious fact is, not that we persecute them, or even neglect them, but this—*the self-vindication which we cherish in the midst of this neglect*, and the eagerness with which we catch at anything by which we may *justify that neglect*.

II. The light in which such conduct is viewed by God. This contempt of others leads Him here to declare, *by way of recompense*, that He would restore to His favour the people so contemned.

1. Mark the *inhumanity* of it. Jews, no less than ourselves, have immortal souls; yet we make no effort for their salvation! Note Deut. xxiii. 3, 4. Yet we hold from them the Bread of Life, &c.

2. The *injustice* of it. Gospel to be preached to "every creature," *beginning* at Jerusalem (see Rom. xi. 30, 31). We are *debtors* to them (Rom. xv. 26, 27).

3. The *ingratitude* of it. Jews—the Apostles—laboured for Gentiles; should not we, in return, for them! (Phil. ii. 17, 18.)

4. The *impiety* of it. Christ became "a curse" for us; surely it is our reasonable service to do all we can for His glory. Alas! Ezek. xxxiv. 6.

III. The explanation of this sinful negligence towards the Jews.

1. *Ignorance of the prophetic writings* which so generally prevails.

2. *Indifference to all spiritual interests* which prevails—even about your own souls. Too many of us have never sought salvation for ourselves; how, then, be concerned for others! — *Rev. C. Simeon, M.A.*

See Comments, &c., on chap. xv 4, 5.

Theme: HEALING PROMISED.

i. *Statement* of our case: "The *whole head is sick*, and the whole heart faint; there is no soundness in us," &c. (Isa. i. 5).

ii. *Prayer* of the consciously sick: "Lord, be merciful unto me, *heal my soul*, for I have sinned against Thee" (Ps. xli. 4).

iii. *Promise* from God: "I will *restore health* unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds" (Jer. xxx. 17).

Believe in *your sickness*. Believe in the *Divine Physician*. Believe in *His promise*, and *pray*.

Vers. 18–20. ZION REPEOPLED. See on chap. xvii. 25, 26.

Ver. 21. *Theme:* ISRAEL'S OWN GLORIOUS KING. See Lit. Crit. on verse.

The words should read: "And his Glorious One shall spring from himself [Israel]; and his Ruler shall go forth from his midst; and I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach unto ME; for Who is this that hath pledged His heart to draw near unto *Me!*"

1. This verse emphatically *repudiates a foreign and alien kingship*; for, after the return from exile, Israel's Glorious Ruler is to be a native Prince springing "*from the midst*" of the people themselves.

2. Next, *Jehovah will cause Him to draw near, i.e.*, to Himself; in like sacred access to that exclusively permitted to consecrated priests in the fulfilment of their solemn office. So that He is to *fulfil a Sacred Office* as well as to possess personal Royalty.

3. Then, *He pledges His very life in approaching God, i.e.*, He will carry His life, His "heart," into the effort of *mediation* with God. And *Messiah alone* has made His life responsible as a Surety (Heb. vii. 22, ix. 11–15), in order to gain access, not only for Himself, but for us to God. "*Heart*" is here put for "life," in order to express the *courage*, the *intense purpose* required, to undertake so tremendous a suretyship. This question therefore implies admira-

tion, astonishment at One being found *ready* and co... ...ent for the task.

I. *In origin:* Messiah's **humanity, and His affiliation** with us.

He springs from "our midst;" **is a** *native*, born *of us* and *amongst* us.

II. *In Person:* **Messiah's dignity, and His superiority over us.**

He is indeed *of* Israel, but ... transcends man in His own natural ... He is Israel's "Glorious One." Standing *alone* in His dignity; the Crown of humanity; the "*One*" who is "Glorious."

III. *In office:* **Messiah's royalty, and His priesthood for us.**

He is our "Ruler;" and He "draws near" God as a priest.

IV. *In suretyship:* **Messiah's self-devotion; His approach to God for us.**

And who but He; who, in nature Divine, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yet made Himself of no reputation, could possess "*the heart*" —of courage, consecration, and love— to approach God as man's *Representative* and *Redeemer*?

Comments—

Lowth says: "The Hebrew word is in the singular number, and literally signifies their "Mighty One," a title given to God Himself (Ps. xciii. 4), and to a mighty Angel (Isa. x. 34), probably the WORD, or *Son of God*. He shall have *near attendance upon Me* ('I will cause Him to draw near'); for I will make Him a Priest to Me as well as a King, according to the prophecy concerning the Messiah (Ps. cx. 4). '*For who is this*,' &c.,—who is there but the Messiah that is so entirely devoted to My service? See Ps. xl. 8; John iv. 34, xiv. 31."

Henderson remarks: "Who this illustrious Governor is, has been disputed. Michaelis and Scholz think it may have been John Hyrcanus; Grotius and others, Zerubbabel. But with neither of these will the predicates properly agree. That the person spoken of was to be *a priest* is generally allowed; but though Hyrcanus was hereditarily high-priest and ruler, yet there was nothing so peculiar about him or his office to call for the declaration that he should 'approach unto' Jehovah; for this all his predecessors had done in the way which he did; or to warrant the pointed and emphatic interrogatory, 'But *who is he?*' &c. The question is put as something altogether unique. Such an approach had never been made before."

Diedrich (in *Lange*). "This Church of God will own a *Prince* '*from its midst*'—Jesus, of our flesh and blood through the Virgin Mary. And He '*approaches God*' as no other can; for He is God's image, God's Son; and at the same time the perfect, holy in all His sufferings, the only obedient Son of man. This King is Mediator and Reconciler with God; He is also High-Priest, and fulfilled all righteousness, as was necessary for our propitiation. What glory to have such a King, who brings us nigh to God! And this *is* our glory."

Ver. 21. *Theme:* ENGAGING THE HEART IN RELIGIOUS SERVICE. "For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me, saith the Lord?"

The promises of God in times past become the encouragement of the Church in times to come.

Because these promises are ratified in Christ. "Yea, and Amen."

Because the dispensations of God proceed upon fixed and settled principles.

The promises here respect recovery from Babylon.

The immediate reference of the text may be to NEHEMIAH.

I. The nature of religion described.
II. The motives that it suggested.

I. **The nature and requisites of religion described.**

"Engaging the heart towards God." Without this all profession is false and all worship vain.

It supposes the *free choice* of God's service, and a full and heartfelt consecration to it. God's service chosen—

i. *Deliberately, without rashness.* "If the Lord be God, serve Him;" "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" "CHOOSE ye this day."

God will not accept a blind faith

Aaron was to light the lamps before he offered incense. Solomon first prescribes, "*Know thou the God of thy fathers*," and then adds, "*Serve Him.*" God made the heart that He might dwell in it.

ii. *Sincerely, without hypocrisy.* Serve Him with a perfect heart; because you choose such a Master as is at once the *Heart-Maker* and the *Heart-Searcher.* Now therefore, as Joshua tells Israel, "*Fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and truth.*" As if he had said, If you intend to serve Him, you must serve Him in *uprightness*, or you do not serve Him at all. God requires good *aims* as well as good *actions;* and He abhors that service, though ever so costly, if the aim of him who serves Him be not good. This is the difference between the service of God and of man. Man can but see the outside, and can only punish outward disobedience and defects but God unveils motive. "*God is a spirit.*"

iii. *Cheerfully, without constraint.* Serve the Lord with "gladness." A bad omen when the victim struggled at the altar. God loves a cheerful giver and a cheerful worshipper (2 Chron. xv. 14).

iv. *Constantly, without end.* In all *things*, in all *places;* in private as in public; in all *times*, prosperity and adversity, life and death; and with all faculties. As the Dutch minister said to Œcolampadius, *Let God speak, and though we had six hundred necks, yet we will make them all stoop in obedience to Him.*

II. Motives to influence this choice of God's service.

i. *From God's rightful claim to it.* God made man to serve Him and to seek his own happiness in God's service; his own honour in God's glory. We are His workmanship, and it becomes us to improve our gifts and capacities to Him from whom we receive them, as all rivers return to the ocean whence they come. As Aulius Fulvius said to his son, when he found him in conspiracy with Catiline, *You were not born for Catiline, but for your country* "(*Non ego te Catilinæ genui, sed patriæ*"). So God says, *I did not give thee soul and body to serve the world and sin, but to serve Me withal.*

Consider the infinite *excellences* which reside in God, as a motive to His service. The lustre of His perfections fills heaven and earth.

Consider the rich *mercies* you receive. So many mercies, so many motives. In creation, in providence, in redemption. We are therefore "*delivered out of the hand of our enemies, that we should serve Him without fear.*" God makes the deliverance from Egypt a motive for keeping the ten commandments: "*I am* the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, therefore thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath." Much more may we argue from redemption: "*Ye are not your own.*"

"*Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.*" If service be not due, do not give it Him; but if it be, it is sacrilege to withhold it.

ii. *From His gracious acceptance of it.* "Who is willing?" He speaks with wonder and delight, shewing that God notices all hearts. There is no service any man does or desires to do, but God marks and registers it. God noticed Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac. Christ noticed every circumstance connected with Mary's anointing His head and washing His feet. God holds up the obedience of Job to Satan: "*Hast thou considered?*"

iii. *From happiness consequent upon it.* "His service perfect freedom." "A day in Thy courts" "Ethiopian went his way," &c. God's service is a type of heaven. We have communion with the "God of all consolation"—with the Spirit, *the Comforter.*

God alone can fill the heart. In His service you have encouraging *promises, examples, providences, experiences, prospects.*

iv. From consequences of not serving Him (vers. 23, 24).

III. Hints of direction.

i. *To those who have engaged their hearts to God. Walk worthy.*

Study to attain a temper of mind more and more spiritual.

strictly guard the avenues of the inward man.

Bear yourself as the inhabitant of a better country.

Comprehend the entire frame of that holy rectitude in which the image of God consists.

Converse with the Word of God. Occupy your thoughts with God.

"Delight thyself in Him."

ii. *To those who have not.* Take care you do not carry the controversy into another world.

By how much nature revolts, by so much seek grace.

Ver. 22. "*Ye shall be My people, and I will be your God.*" Comp. chap. xxiv. 7.

Vers. 23, 24. "*The whirlwind of the Lord.*" Comp. chap. xxiii. 19, 29, and xxv. 32.

Ver. 24. *Theme:* CONSIDERATION. "*In the latter days ye shall consider it.*"

After denouncing the Lord's judgments upon a people laden with iniquity, and looking beyond to a time of restoration and peace, Jeremiah *rebukes their present carelessness and indifference* by assuring them that, in that better time to come, *they will look back with very different feelings* upon their present conduct as a nation.

I. There comes a closing period of a course of action or conduct, when it can all be looked back upon, and *the effects are seen* and *the results experienced.*

The great practical point is to urge upon us—

1. The *necessity of closely examining our own heart and life*, with especial reference to the light in which they will appear even to ourselves hereafter. For

2. The *crisis will arrive when we shall reap that which we have sown;* or, above all, when we shall come *to cast one long look behind*, as our feet totter on the borders of the grave.

II. It *may seem difficult thus*, by *due consideration*, to realise at one time of life, or at one station in the course of action, the *point of view which* seems to belong to another. But the attainment is not difficult.

1. It is, in fact, *easy to those who wish for it and strive for it.* It is simply the *true* point of view.

2. Our case would be hard if *the Lord had not provided for our guidance into all truth*, not only of doctrine, but *of life and conduct*, at every period of our course.

3. We have *in the Scriptures* a sure and certain light unto our path; and he who has been careful to store his mind with its holy teachings, will never be at a loss to decide upon his conduct, or upon any course of conduct he contemplates.

4. If a man hears these words, whether, at the time, he heeds them or not, receives them or not, they *fail not to judge him in his own consciousness* (John xii. 48), not only at the last day, but in his "latter days"—those great days of decision.

III. Such a standard of invincible truth should be erected in the mind, constraining man to become his own judge, and enabling him to decide between the accusings and excusings of his conscience.

1. Therefore, *minds should be filled with a knowledge of Scripture*, even though, at the time, those minds entertain no adequate impression of its saving power.

2. The mind, *earnestly desirous of realising this most true latter-end view of things*, may *obtain them through the gentle teachings of the Divine Spirit*, who has never yet denied them to any who sought them in singleness of heart.

IV. With these essential and sure guides to wise consideration, we are without excuse if we neglect the duty, *and brutal if we despise the privilege.*

1. Who is there, *looking back*, but can *discern grievous stains*, fearful shortcomings, distressing faithlessness—dishonouring to Christ, defiling to his own soul, and burdensome to his conscience—and compelled to exclaim, "Oh, that I had considered, that I had given one thought to God and the latter end before I took this burden on my soul!"

2. The longer this habit of "consideration" is *postponed*, the *more burdensome it becomes.* There is much in a heart-searching retrospect, over the

earliest and most innocent period of life, to awaken compunction and regret; but if the wholesome check, which the habit of considering the latter end imposes, be *not found in good time*, the blackening horror of the later and more advanced period makes that early time seem bright in the comparison, and gives birth to feelings which have found expression in such words as these—

"Lost days of youth! Oh, holy days,
When joy was blest with prayer and praise—
When this sad heart, now deeply dyed
With many a thought unsanctified,
Trembled at every venial stain,
And shrunk from sin as now from pain.

Oh, not that even in that hour
Of early reason's dawning power,
My soul was pure from thoughts of sin;
But now so dark the past has been,
That those first stains from young offence
Bear the bright hue of innocence."

—*Kitto.*

CHAPTER XXXI.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—*Vide* on chap. xxx. These two chapters form an unbroken prophecy, "a triumphal hymn of Israel's salvation." The former chapter pledges the recovery from captivity of both "Israel and Judah;" this addresses "*all the families* of Israel," then distinctively the *ten tribes;* and finally returns with separate assurances to Judah, then to Israel and Judah together.

Geographical References.—Ver. 15. "*Voice heard in Ramah,*" a city of Benjamin, near where Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, was buried. Ver. 38. "*Hill Gareb, to Goath.*" "Gareb" means the *hill of lepers*, and must have been outside the old walls of Zion, towards the south-west. "*The tower of Hananeel*" was at the north-east corner of Jerusalem. Of "*Goath*" nothing is known; the Targum translates it *cow-pool*. Ver. 40. "*Valley of the dead bodies,*" &c.: *i.e.*, the valley of Ben-hinnom.

Personal Allusion.—Ver. 15. "*Rahel weeping for her children.*" As the mother of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, Rachel is here regarded figuratively as weeping for the scattered ten tribes of Israel.

Natural History.—Ver. 5. "*Vines upon the mountains of Samaria.*" The mountains of Samaria produced specially good vines; see Judges ix. 27. Ver. 12. "*For wheat, and wine, and oil,*" &c.: suggestive of the fertility and richness of the land of Canaan. Ver. 29. "*Eaten a sour grape.*" A proverb; see Ezek. xviii. 2.

Manners and Customs.—Ver. 4. "*Adorned with tabrets.*" Usual for the women to go forth with *timbrels* and dancing in times of public joy and festivity (Exod. xv. 20; Judges xi. 34, &c.). Ver. 19. "*Smote upon my thigh:*" an action indicating *extreme astonishment and sorrow* (Ezek. xxi. 12). It is represented as having this significance by several classic authors. Ver. 24. "*Husbandmen and they that go forth with flocks.*" Referring to the pastoral life of their ancestors, when every one was literally a "husbandman" and "shepherd" in consequence of the allotment of land which he was forbidden to alienate. They should return to a similar pastoral life of simplicity and security.

Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 2. "*The people left of the sword.*" This description points, not back to Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, for it would not describe their condition then, for they were *not* then "a people left of the sword;" but to Israel in captivity, after "the sword" of those who now carried them captive had ceased its destructive work. How then interpret "*found grace in the wilderness*"? what "wilderness"? Their Babylonish captivity may well be described as a wilderness condition. Or the allusion may be to the desert lying between Assyria and Palestine. And מָצָא may be taken as a prophetic future. And the words, "*When I went to cause him to rest,*" do not really point to past time; for the verb, הָלוֹךְ, is the infinitive absolute, lit., *a-going*. It has, however, the force of an imperative: *Let me go;* or, "*I will go* to cause Israel to rest."

Ver. 3. "*Of old.*" Henderson urges that מֵרָחוֹק expresses here distance of *time* not of *place;* but most commentators prefer the latter: "*from afar.*" See xxx. 10. To a Jew's thoughts, God's dwelling was in Zion; and hence, when His mercy reached them in Assyrian exile, it came from afar (2 Chron. vi. 20, 38).

"*With loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*" מָשַׁךְ is rendered as *prolonged, continued* (Pss. xxxvi. 11, cix. 12); "I have *prolonged loving-kindness to thee.*" But Hitzig, Fuerst, and Naegelsbach prefer rendering it *respited*: "*in loving-kindness have I respited thee.*"

Ver. 5. "*Eat them as common things:*" rather, "*shall freely enjoy the fruit;*" no injunction being placed upon the enjoyment. See Lev. xix. 25; Deut. xx. 6.

Ver. 7. "*Shout among the chief,*" &c.: rather, "shout *because* of the chief of the nations of Israel."

Ver. 8. "A great company shall return *thither:*" no, *hither*. Not to exile, but to Palestine
Ver. 18. "*A bullock unaccustomed:*" lit., *an untrained calf*.
Ver. 22. "*A woman shall compass a man.*" Variously rendered. Dr. Payne, Dr. Wette, Umbreit, &c., *The female shall protect the strong man*. Ewald, "*The woman shall be changed into a man.*" Naegelsbach, "*The woman shall turn the man,*" becoming the stronger of the two. Wordsworth, with the Fathers, see in these words a hint of the *miraculous conception of Christ*. But Henderson gives the sense that Jehovah would make the *feeblest* of them [the *woman*] more than a match for *the most powerful* of their foes.

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* THE GOD OF FAMILIES. "*At the same time will I be the God of all the families of Israel.*"

There is one solid Rock on which the hope and happiness of the moral universe may rest amidst all the vicissitudes of time; and that whatever dark appearances may surround the interests of the Church, like clouds which obscure the face of the heavens, the sun shall yet shine forth again with unquenched lustre and unabated strength. "*The mountains may depart, the hills must be removed, but God's loving-kindness never shall depart, the covenant of His peace can never be broken.*"

To this topic Jeremiah had recourse in the troublous times in which he lived, when he was called to deplore the fallen greatness of the Church, and to witness the dissolution and the breaking up of the Jewish state and monarchy. He looks back upon what God did for His Church in the captivity of Egypt, as the pledge and pattern of what He will do for it in the captivity of Babylon (vers. 2, 3). So David teaches us to argue from the same principles when he says, "*Oh, how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that fear Thee.*" What is *laid up* in God's promises, and what is *laid out* for them in God's providences, form an equal ground of encouragement and hope. Paul in like manner ascends up before the springs of time: "*Blessed be the God and Father, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy.*"

I. Some of the truths which this promise implies.

II. Some of the encouragements it presents.

III. Some of the duties it involves.

I. **Some of the truths which this promise implies.** "I will be the God of all the families of Israel." Not of the two tribes only, Judah and Benjamin, the royal tribes, but the ten tribes. Not of the house of Aaron only, and the families of Levi, but of all their families; not only of their state in general, but their particular families.

1. *A deep interest in their welfare.* That God takes a deep interest in family religion, and delights to see the succession of piety kept up in the dwelling-places of the righteous, is evident both by the tenor of His promises and by the train of His dispensations. No sight is more pleasing to man than that of a well-ordered family. The safety and well-being of a *country* must necessarily depend upon the moral training of the families of which it is composed. No less important is it to the well-being of the *Church*. Families are the nurseries of the Church. God therefore, in determining upon the stability of the Church, looks with watchful and tender eye upon the prosperity of families.

God delights to speak of Himself as standing in a domestic relation: "*Like as a father.*" The image most frequently used: "If ye being evil . . . your heavenly Father," &c.

2. *He calls your children His children.* He makes distinguishing promises to them. The very first promise was made to Eve's offspring. The covenant with Abraham incorporated his children's name as well as his own: "*I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee.*" He promises to David, "*Instead of thy fathers, the children;*" to Isaiah, "*This is the covenant I make with thee: I will pour out My Spirit on thy seed.*"

3. Remember that Jesus Himself became a little child. He rose, not like

Adam, in the fulness and meridian of His strength, but passed through the intermediate states of infancy and childhood. When the wise men came from afar "*they saw the young Child and Mary His mother.*" He did this that He might consecrate the state of infancy as well as the state of manhood; and assure parents that He can sympathise with the weakness and infirmities of childhood and youth, as well as those of riper years. He was a lover of children (Mark x. 13–16; Matt. xviii. 3–14).

4. Do not omit to remark what a gracious aspect all this has upon the *salvation of infants;* and what comfort it affords those who have lost their offspring, that they are gathered to the fold of the Good Shepherd. In God's world there is no waste of existence. "*Millions of infant souls compose the family above.*" David said, in reference to the loss of his child, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." And if he reasoned thus under the darkness of that dispensation, surely our faith need not be less strong under the brightness of this. "*If that which was done away was glorious,* much more that which remaineth is rather glorious."

II. This promise encourages Christian parents in their endeavours to train their offspring in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Great duties devolve upon you; great anxieties perpetually occur in connection with your own responsibility; and great consolations are furnished in the Word of God.

1. No greater inducement can be furnished to avail yourselves of all means for their religious improvement than the thought that *God sympathises with you* both in the affections you cherish and in the difficulties with which you are surrounded. If it be true that God takes so deep an interest in the progress of religion in families—is concerned for the salvation of the young—if it be true that He builds up His Church chiefly from the families of His people, then it follows that great duties devolve on parents and heads of families, and it becomes them to seek the grace and blessing of God.

2. These promises should be *earnestly pleaded in prayer,* should encourage watchful effort. They are not given as a premium to indolence, but as an inducement to the faithful discharge of known duty.

3. God has made the love of parents to their children proverbially strong; for moral objects, *that their interests for both worlds may be secured.* There never was a Christian parent, touched with the love of God, who was not anxious for his children, anxious to lead them to the Saviour he loved and the heaven he sought; anxious that they who are partakers of all their hopes on earth should be partakers of all their joys in heaven.

4. *Education* is the great care with which you are entrusted. If negligent, on you as well as them the reproach and misery will fall. You may be regardless of your son's morals, but you may live and die miserable from his want of them.

Think of the happiness of meeting them in a future world. Guide them to Christ. Endear the Bible, and the Sabbath, and the Saviour to them.

Remember the temptations they are exposed to, and how many fall into the snares of the wicked.

III. Some of the duties this promise involves—

1. Prayer for *early conversion* of children.

2. *Training of families* in godliness and faith.

3. *Public dedication* of our children by baptism, to God.

4. Recognition of God's *laws,* and *providence,* and *honour* in all family plans.

5. *Consecration by young persons* of themselves to God.

6. Maintain *domestic worship around the family altar.*

7. Let families, in their entirety, *come together to God's sanctuary,* and be united in *the fellowship of the Christian Church.*

See Homilies on chap. lii. 18.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* "SPARED THROUGH

GRACE. "The people left of the sword found grace in the wilderness."

I. Spared, though others perished.

Many were cut off for their iniquities; some by the Amalekites (Exod. xvii. 8), some by the hands of their brethren (Exod. xxxii. 28).

The destroyed around us witness to *our like deserts.*

II. Spared through sovereign grace.

1. *To God's praise.* "The living, the living, they shall praise Thee, as we do this day."

2. *Witnessing to His compassion and patience.*

III. Spared to inherit favours.

1. Conducted by Him into the promised land of rest.

2. Spared to enjoy all the fulness of covenanted privilege.

3. Blessed with prolonged realisation of Divine goodness and bounty.

See Homilies on chap. ii. 2.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* PROGRESS OF MAN'S SALVATION.

A condensed view of the origin, progress, and consummation of man's salvation.

I. The feeling with which God regards each of His people: "I have loved thee."

II. The kind of love with which God has regarded His people: "Everlasting love."

III. The visible operation and effect of this love: "I have drawn thee."

(*a.*) A change of position or state.

(*b.*) A change accomplished by God: "*I* have drawn thee."

(*c.*) A change not accomplished without resistance: "*Drawn.*"

IV. The means which God employs in drawing His people: "Loving-kindness."—*Rev. James Stewart, Aberdeen,* 1862.

See Addenda: EVERLASTING LOVE.

Theme: DRAWN WITH EVERLASTING LOVE.

God has often "appeared" to man. In *His visible creation* He reveals Himself, lavishing the wealth, garniture, and beauty of nature upon a sinful race. In *His daily providences* He appears to man; fresh fountains of mercy spring up at my feet. But especially God appears *in the mystery of grace and redemption,* showing the fulness of His mercy in Christ Jesus.

Thus, in *Creation* we discern the print of His footsteps; in *Providence* we behold the operations of His gracious hand; but in *Redemption* we are allowed to see the very movements and purposes of His all-gracious heart.

I. *View this love of God in* its far-reaching compass and largeness. "*Of old,*" as to *time;* but more correctly "*from afar,*" as to *place.* God's love *reaches out to the exiles far removed from Zion.*

1. To the *banished* ones—captive and exiled—removed "afar."

2. To those *estranged*—spiritually at a distance, "alienated from the life of God," wilfully "afar."

3. To men *everywhere.* Gathers in all with a world-wide embrace.

II. *View this love of God in* its absolute directness and inalienable purpose. "*Yea,* I have loved *thee.*"

1. Its *positiveness.* "*Yea,* I *have*" Not equivocal, and conjectural, or conditional.

2. Its *intensity.* "I *have loved.*" Great-hearted affection.

3. Its *personality.* "*I* have loved *thee.*" "The Lord *knoweth* them that are His."

4. Its *conscious reality.* God Himself *felt* and realised that He *had loved* Israel. It was a conscious passion to God Himself. He yearns with strong ardour over the objects of His great affection.

III. *View this love of God in* its ceaseless constancy. "With everlasting love."

1. *In retrospect* it is "everlasting." Not recent, but vastly remote in its origin.

2. *In covenant fidelity* it is "everlasting." Not vacillating, not insecure as was *theirs!*

3. *Amid their changeful history* it is "everlasting." Whether they were in Zion, or "afar" in exile; whether they as a nation maintained His worship, or

became "lost" to their own identity and to their holy religion, He loved and would cherish them still.

4. *Throughout all future ages* it is "everlasting." God's nature is not "variable;" "the thoughts of His heart are to all generations."

IV. *View this love of God in* its gracious action and powerful attractiveness. "Therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

1. Hence, *with God begins the work of alluring souls* into reconciliation. It is not the sinner who commences; God's grace "draws" him, and thus he is "made willing," "made nigh."

2. The *force which draws* the soul is "*love*." As all the coin of the kingdom bears the image of the sovereign, so all the blessings of salvation bear the stamp of love. "With loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

3. When the heart rests in God's love, it finds its own love for Him to be *the result of and response to* His love for us. "We love Him *because* He first loved us."

4. All *drawings of God* should be yielded to with gratitude, wonder, alacrity, and joy.

Note—

(*a.*) This is A MOST TOUCHING AND SUBLIME ASSURANCE. When we look *at ourselves* we wonder that God can love us at all. And if His love had to be caused by anything in us, He could never find occasion for His love. But the love which God has for us comes not *from us* to Him, but *from Him* to us. He loves us, not because *we are lovable*, but because *He is loving*.

(*b.*) This "*everlasting love*" is A MOST STUPENDOUS THOUGHT TO GRASP. Before we had any *objective* existence; before we stood out as individuals of the human race, He loved us. The moment we were born into the world, *that moment we began to live in the love of God*.

The ray of light from a star has been running down the measureless path of space *long, long centuries before earth was peopled by man;* but before the wave (which made the starlight shine in the heavens) was started in the ether by the pulsations from that distant star, *God was loving me*. Oh, that vast eternity of love!

If that love was *from* everlasting, shall it not be *to* everlasting? Yes.

(*c.*) There is A PROPHETIC SWEEP OF HOPE IN THIS FACT. Can that *end* which had *no beginning*? Shall we *fear* that a fountain which flows perennially and freely can at some far-off age run dry? Ages have not exhausted it. It is "*everlasting* love." Surely this both *wins* and *shall hold* our love to God.

> "Infinite Goodness! Thou art dear
> To Thy poor creature's heart;
> It blesses Thee that Thou art God,
> That Thou art what Thou art."

Theme: EVERLASTING LOVE.
I. *Sovereign in its character.*
II. *Costly in its manifestation.*
III. *Glorious in its results.*

Ver. 6. *Theme:* THE WATCHMEN'S CALL. "There shall be a day that the watchmen upon Mount Ephraim shall cry, "Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God."

I. God's heralds. "Watchmen," *stationed on eminences* (not on one mountain only, but the whole mountainous region of the ten tribes), *see the auspicious hour, call to the alien and exile tribes.* Type of the preacher of the Gospel:—(1.) *Elevated* above the people; (2.) *Discerns* their gracious opportunity; (3.) *Summons* the wanderers and outcasts home.

II. Reunion in Zion. The *ten tribes* are here called to go up to the annual feasts at Jerusalem, and there *join with the tribes of Judah* in keeping the appointed festivals of Zion. The schism between the twelve tribes was healed.

1. Those who were *estranged* one from the other become united in *fraternity and fellowship in Zion.* See Isa. xi. 13.

2. The sacred festivities and *privileges of the Church of Christ* cast all human divisions and differences *into oblivion.* Many members, but *one body.* Many nations, but *one kingdom.* The *world* gets back to unity again, away

from its feuds and strifes, when it gets into and becomes the *Church*.

III. God sought. "Unto the Lord our God."

1. From whom *we formerly revolted*. Now again "*our* God;" accepted, desired, and sought.

2. In whom *we again unite*. "The Lord;" none but He. No rival deity; "God all in all." "All one in *Christ Jesus*."

Note—

Cowles remarks: "*God's grace* loves to *triumph* over the *most inveterate prejudices*. No words could represent a greater or more benign change in national feeling than these: Samaria saying, through her spiritual watchmen, Let us go up to Zion to worship, for our God is there."

Vers. 7–9. *Theme:* RESTORATION OF THE JEWS. God's command that the males of all the twelve tribes should go up thrice a year to worship the Lord at Jerusalem.

We may conjecture what such a concourse will take place, in due season, from every quarter of the world.

In reference to the restoration of the Jews, we have here—

I. A command to us. God enjoins us—

1. *To take an interest in the welfare of His people*. "Sing with gladness for Jacob," &c. We ought to keep in view God's gracious designs respecting them, so as to have our hearts filled with joy in the contemplation of the blessings awaiting them.

2. *To express that interest in every suitable way*. "*Publish* it" to Jew and Gentile alike: "*praise ye*" God for it, and in fervent *prayer* seek God on their behalf. Say, "O Lord, save Thy people," &c.

II. A promise to them. This promise includes—

1. *Their restoration to God* (ver. 8), however *distant* they are from Him, or however *discouraging* their circumstances. "A great company shall return thither."

2. *The manner in which it shall be effected* (ver. 9). "*With weeping*," &c., as in Zech. xii. 10. Under gracious Divine leading: "I will cause them to walk by rivers," &c. He will guide them by His counsel, strengthen them by His grace, and comfort them by His Spirit, till He bring them in safety to His glory.

3. *The pledge that it shall be surely accomplished*. "For I am a Father to Israel," &c. When Moses urged Pharaoh to liberate Israel, he enforced his request by the plea that they were "*God's first-born*." In this light He still regards them, and will prove Himself their "Father" (ver. 37, with Isa. liv. 9, 10).

Application—

1. Look well to it that you are yourselves restored to God.

2. Endeavour to help forward the restoration of others.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

Ver. 9. *Theme:* PILGRIMS TO ZION. "They shall come with weeping," &c.

The text unites the *dispensation of God to His people* with the *affections which they cherish towards God*. It refers to the deliverance of the Church from the captivity of Babylon, and to the feelings which they cherished on their return; and the same principles are developed in the experience of all who are born of God and bound for glory. Zion's pilgrims are distinguished—

I. By the various emotions which they cherish. "Come with weeping."

II. By the safe-conduct under which they journey: "I will lead them."

III. By the high alliance they are permitted to claim. "I am a father."

IV. By the prosperous issue of their eventful pilgrimage. "Sing in Zion."

I. The various emotions which they cannot but cherish. "Weeping and supplication" not unmixed with joy. The return from Babylon was a season of joy and congratulation, yet productive of mixed feeling—they came with weeping and supplication. Great events in life often produce opposite emotions. The moment of transition is a critical one—calls up many recollections of the past, many anticipations of the future. The prisoner has been known to sigh at leaving his dungeon; the bride trembles

at the altar; the prince receives the crown not without emotion; the Christian takes upon him the vows of God under mingled impressions. *Tears and prayers do well together.* There is no entrance into the path of life but through the valley of weeping; and repentance characterises the Christian all his journey through. Tertullian said of himself that *he was born to nothing but repentance.* It was the saying of a godly minister that, *if he were to die in the pulpit, he should like to die preaching repentance; and if out of the pulpit, he would wish to die practising repentance.* This is always needful, and especially when we go to seal a covenant with God, or to seek the witness of the Spirit with ours. When did Jacob find God in Bethel but when he wept and made supplication? When did Mary meet with Christ but when she sought Him sorrowing? When did angels minister to Christ but after strong crying and tears in the garden? Behold the print of the footsteps of all the cloud of witnesses in this road. "*They come.*"

They weep and pray under the—1. *Consciousness of their sins.* Unprofitable.

2. *The remembrance of their captivity.* Remembering affliction and misery.

3. *The difficulties of their course.* A rough journey, many impediments.

3. *The sorrows of those with whom they are associated.* Sympathy.

5. *The mourning over those they have left behind in Babylon.* It was only a remnant, two tribes at most came from Babylon. They were attached to Babylon, had many connections, and filled important posts there, and Zion in her ruins was forgotten. The Christian is not careless of the state of his relations and friends yet strangers to God. Bunyan makes it a heavy part of Christian's sorrow that he could not persuade his wife and children to travel with him.

It is to mourners that promises are made: "*Come unto Me.*" The influences of the Spirit are quite as likely to produce contrition as joy.

II. **The safe-conduct under which they journey.** "I," says God, "will *lead* them;" or they would never attain their journey's end. "*I will gather them;*" or they would never be collected. "*I will cause them to walk;*" or they would never have the inclination. God brings us into the way of truth, God protects us in it, God furnishes us with adequate support, and God brings us to the termination of our career in peace. We may doubt as to the reality of our religion, but if we are conscious of possessing it we cannot doubt to whom we owe it. "*Who hath saved us.*"

The guidance of mortal spirits into the paths of holiness and to the perfection of heavenly rest has been a favourite object with God from the beginning. He teaches "to walk *in a strait* way"—preserves from falling—going back—"*keeps feet.*"

"*By the rivers of water*"—not without refreshment—not without happiness—not without a constant sense of obligation. It denotes both refreshment and supply, and these are granted where least *expected*, and to those who could not perform the journey without guidance and assistance not their own—"*the blind and lame.*" Grace triumphs over all obstacles.

III. **The high alliance they are permitted to claim.** "I am a father." This wandering band, outcasts to the world, may call the Sovereign of the universe a Friend and Father. This title indicates the richness of God's condescension and the Principle whence salvation flows.

IV. **The happy issue of their eventful pilgrimage.** "Height of Zion" (ver. 12). "*Come to Zion.*" 1. Blissful. 2. Restful. 3. Fruitful.

Application—

1. Strangers to prayer and penitence are not on the path to heaven.

2. Those who trust their own resources may expect to wander, to faint, or to fall.—*S. Thodey*, 1825.

See Addenda: TEARS OF PENITENCE; and also Homilies on chap. iii. 21, 22.

Vers. 10–14. *Theme:* GOD'S PROCLAMATION OF GRAND PURPOSES FOR HIS PEOPLE. Jehovah would have the nations KNOW—

I. How He guards His people with fostering care. Though *He chastises them* — "*scattered them*" — yet He *cherishes and fosters* them with watchful care and purposes of restoration; and will suffer *no harm or loss* to them, for He "shepherds" them constantly.

II. How mightily He has wrought for His people's redemption.

Ver. 11. "With outstretched arm," "travailing in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save."

1. *Past rescues.* These have proved God's almightiness and all-sufficiency.

2. *Pledge of future redemption.* No foe can "stay His hand."

III. How luxuriant are the blessings with which He will crown and enrich their future (ver. 12).

1. *Religious and ecclesiastical privileges.* "To the heights of Zion."

2. *Divine beneficence.* "To the goodness of the Lord."

3. *Abounding fulness of enjoyment,* "Sing;" "for wheat," &c.

4. *Sadness lost in blessedness.* "Their soul as a watered garden;" and sorrow no more at all.

IV. How all-inclusive shall be these sacred delights of the Church.

1. *Every sex and age* shall have full share of holy bliss (ver. 13).

2. *Priests and people* alike "satisfied" with the "goodness" of the Lord (ver. 14). "Both *he that soweth* and *they that reap* shall rejoice together."

Ver. 12. *Theme:* THE FUTURE OF BELIEVERS. "And their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more." What is to be the future of the true Israel of God?

I. One of spiritual faultlessness and perfection. Beautiful as a "garden;" fertile, well graced, rich in fragrance and fruit.

II. One of boundless resources. Of *joy,* for they shall sorrow no more. Of *satisfaction,* for no inward lack shall give them distress. Of *rest,* amid the blessedness of happy employ.

III. One of vast possessions. So that their "soul" is filled with the treasures of spiritual good; filled as a "garden" stored with choicest blossoms, fragrant with richest perfume.

Ver. 12. *Theme:* SOUL FERTILITY. "*Their soul shall be as a watered garden.*"

This was really fulfilled *in the Jews,* who returned to Jerusalem after the miseries they had suffered in Babylon; many of whom (see Ezra and Nehemiah's records) were men of eminent piety and zeal for God. Having rebuilt the Temple, and thus opened "the wells of salvation," they drew thence the waters of consolation and spiritual life.

But in the *Gospel times* we see these words fulfilled in every pious soul when in a flourishing and prosperous state.

I. *Thoughts suggested by* a comparison of a pious soul with a garden.

1. A garden is a spot of ground *upon which extraordinary cultivation is employed.* Thus the souls of believers are "the garden of the Lord"—the objects of His peculiar care and cultivation (Isa. v. 1, 2).

2. A garden is generally stored with *productions of either a useful or ornamental order.* So from the soul springs up every Christian virtue and heavenly grace which is either pleasing to God or useful to man (Isa. xli. 19, 20; lv. 13).

3. A garden does *not arrive at its full perfection and glory at once.* The Christian's course is progressive.

II. *Consider those* Divine influences by which this spiritual garden is watered.

1. *The influences of the Spirit of God* are imparted to every real Christian, and produce effects that resemble those which warm and refreshing showers produce upon a garden (Isa. lxiv. 3). If these are *withheld,* how does the garden droop! It is the office of the Holy Spirit to "shed the love of God abroad in our hearts," &c.

2. These influences are enjoyed and *conveyed to the soul by the means of God's Word and ordinances* (Isa. lv. 10, 11). It is in the exercise of *reading* and *hearing* God's Word, and in *prayer,* that the communications of God's Spirit are enjoyed.

III. Mark how *this happy state and those enriching influences are* to be desired by every soul.

1. Till we attain these, *we are in a desolate, wild condition* (Heb. vi. 8).

2. It is only by attaining this state *that we can arrive at true happiness* either here or hereafter (Heb. vi. 7).

3. Unless we are in this state *we cannot glorify God, nor be useful to our fellow-creatures*, as we ought. When we are "fruitful in every good word and work," God is pleased with us, &c.

Learn: The *need we have daily to ask for Divine* influences.—*Rev. J. Sewell*, Thaxted, A.D. 1842.

Ver. 13. *Theme:* GOD OUR COMFORTER. "And I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow."

In Greenland, when a stranger knocks at the door, he asks, *Is God in this house?* And if they answer "Yes," he enters.

Let me knock at the door of your hearts and inquire, *Is God in this house?* Are you frequent at His throne? Do you love and belong to Christ? Are you living in the daily exercise of faith and repentance? Do you sorrow for sin? Are you aspiring to heaven? If so, you are the persons to whom this promise is made.

I. The particular character which God here assumes. The Comforter. I "will comfort them."

Not only after it but "from" it. Their joy takes a lustre from previous sorrow, as the brightness of morning from the darkness of night.

1. *This is a much-needed office*, for there are many mourners. The voice of weeping is often heard in our land. Our earth teems with mourners who are seeking a sad asylum from the sorrows of life in the darkness and silence of the grave.

Many mourners here. Some under the afflictions of life; some under the disappointment of their hopes of happiness from the world; some under the baseness of deceitful friendship; some under the loss of near and dear connections; some under the straits and difficulties of a trying path; and some under the burden of sin.

Spiritual sorrows are specially referred to in the text. "*They shall come with weeping.*" The Christian life begins with sorrow, ends with joy. Some "*sorrow after a godly sort:*" over evil habits; weakness of faith; decline of hope.

2. *This is an office to which God only is equal.* As when the sun is set none but God can cause it to rise again; so when hope is lost and comfort gone, none but God can restore it. Hence David prays, "*Restore to me the joy,*" &c. Jeremiah could not do it. He could only speak the comfort to others which God spake to him; but God can convey the consolation direct to the heart.

God speaks of Himself as "*the Hope of Israel and the Consolation thereof.*" Jesus is described as "*the Consolation of Israel.*" The Holy Spirit is "*another Comforter.*" Thus all the Persons in the Godhead conspire in this most needed and most delightful work.

God only can do it, because He only knows what the trial is—how heavily it presses—and how to apply to the burdened spirit the needed relief.

All creatures might shrink from the task and say, "*Am I in God's stead?*"

3. *This is an office which God delights to exercise.* "He delighteth in mercy." It is His nature and property always to have mercy. It is not more natural for the sun to shine, or for the fountain to pour forth its streams, than for God to show compassion. He is "*the Father of mercies,*" "*the God of all consolation.*" "*As one whom his mother comforteth,*" &c.

4. *It is an office in which the Father of mercies has had large experience.* All the tears wiped from human faces have been removed by His hand. All the hopes awakened in penitent bosoms have been inspired by His mercy.

II. Some of the methods He employs for this purpose. The instrumentality is various, the Agency is One. Sometimes by friends, sometimes ministers, sometimes ordinances, sometimes by strangers, sometimes by enemies. But God is the

Source of all these streams. He "makes us rejoice from sorrow."

1. *By the application to the mind of the sense of pardon and acceptance by Christ.* Thus, by Nathan, He restored to David the joy of His salvation: "The Lord hath put away thy sin." Thus, by Isaiah, He comforted Hezekiah. Thus, by Ananias, He comforted Paul.

In various ways He enlarges our perception of the fulness and freeness of redeeming love, shows us His covenant, teaches us out of His law, enables us to apply the promises. "*My thoughts are not your thoughts.*"

2. *By the teaching and influence of His Spirit.* We read of the "comfort of the Holy Ghost;" and we cannot doubt that that blessed Agent has direct access to the human mind, in stirring us up to prayer, in strengthening holy purposes and resolutions, in giving efficacy to religious ordinances and especially to the Word received and preached.

3. *By the agency of His providence,* in removing afflictions when their end is answered—as in bringing Israel out of Egypt and back from Babylon. So He can turn again our captivity, raise up friends, make our path straight, disperse the clouds.

4. *By translating the soul from earth to heaven.*

III. The course of conduct we should pursue.

1. *Seek consolation by prayer.*

2. *Avoid whatever tends to bring the spirit to bondage.*

3. *Be comforting.*

4. *Cherish hope*—happy thoughts.

Seek to be acquainted with higher rules of self-denial, and charity, and mortification of sin, than you have yet known. Beg of God to teach you what you know not of the spirituality of the law and exactness of the rule.

Ver. 14. *Theme:* THE SATISFYING NATURE OF GOD'S GOODNESS. "*And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord.*"

Our subject contains a striking prediction of the ingathering of the Jews, and the joyous events which should distinguish the occasion. Among the rest this is one, that "they should be satisfied," &c. The text is capable of a general application, and belongs equally to all the household of faith and family of God. Let us, then, consider—

I. The character. "My people." God's people were not always such. "I have made you a people," &c. Once afar off, aliens, &c. They became God's people by the attractive power of the Gospel, by the influence of the grace and Spirit of God, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They repented of sin, and fled by faith to the hope set before men in the Gospel. Many are the distinguishing features of God's people.

1. *They are separated from the world.* Not "of the world," "Come out," &c. Thus, too, they are united to His Church. "We will go with you," &c. "This people," &c. They profess, and confess Christ before men.

2. *They reflect the image of the Saviour;* are "partakers of His nature and spirit; and hence are likeminded with Christ, renewed into His holy and blessed likeness.

3. *They are obedient to Christ's authority.* "As His sheep," &c. As His pupils, &c. They follow Christ, and hear His commandments to do them. They call Him Lord, and do the things, &c. "Whoso doeth the will of My Father."

II. The declaration. "Shall be satisfied," &c. Sin began by dissatisfaction. This is one of the constant exhibitions of evil in the world. The general inquiry is, "Who will show," &c. The soul in the midst of the riches, honours, pleasures, &c., is still unsatisfied; formed for an infinite good, God alone can meet its desires; but God is holy and just, and the soul trembles and flees. God's goodness, then, comes down to the capacities, &c., of the soul. The soul is satisfied with—

1. *God's goodness in the dispensations of His grace.* God's love in Jesus Christ, infinite and overflowing. The soul is melted by it, constrained, subdued, saved; exclaims with rapture, "Who loved me," &c.

2. *God's goodness in the arrangements of His Providence.* This is ever con-

nected with the other. We are first reconciled, and then admire His doings, works, and ways. It is the same goodness in both providence and grace. It never fails nor changes. It is always "goodness," in adversity as well as prosperity, in sickness and health, in sorrow and joy. It is always rich, free, and adapted.

3. *God's goodness in the consummation of glory.* "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness."

Application.—1. Are we the characters? 2. Have we the satisfaction? 3. It is our privilege.—*J. Burns, D.D.*

Ver. 15. *Theme:* RACHEL'S LAMENTATION. "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping: Rahel weeping for her children, and refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not."

I. *A poetic figure representative of the* woes of the exiled tribes of Israel. Jeremiah, foreseeing the coming captivity of his people and destruction of their national life, vividly and dramatically represents Rachel (as if stirred from her grave by the tearing of her children from their natal soil) weeping for her offspring about to be slain by the Chaldean sword. As the mother of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, she is alluded to as if to her belonged all the ten tribes.

1. A mother's grief over her slaughtered sons.

2. Exile from Zion and God is an evil as dreadful as if they were slain. "*They were not!*" (chap. ix. 1).

3. A mother's heart has no room for "comfort" when her children are perishing from life—and from the living God.

II. *A prophetic vision of the* massacre of the Bethlehem children *at the Saviour's birth.* Its primary fulfilment was the murder of Rachel's children by the Chaldeans. Its typical significance received realisation in Herod's slaughter of the Innocents (Matt. ii. 17, 18).

1. *The inhumanity of man brings destruction on innocent victims and anguish upon tender hearts.*

2. *In God's foreseeing gaze,* all deeds of outrage on those He loves (*Israel* and *children*) are *kept in faithful record.* "Whoso toucheth them toucheth the apple of His eye."

3. *Out of events, woeful and cruel, purposes of good are divinely evolved.* Rachel's children were carried into exile, yet God wrought redemption for His captive people. Bethlehem children were slaughtered by Herod, yet the Divine Babe was at hand, to become *the Redeemer of humanity,* and to *fold all childhood* life within His arms and *raise children into eminence in His earthly and heavenly kingdom.*

Vers. 16, 17. *Theme:* CONSOLATIONS AND HOPES. "Refrain thy voice from weeping: there is hope in thine end."

Two points in this connection: Rachel weeping for her *sons,* and Ephraim weeping for his *sins;* and to both classes the voice of sympathy and commiseration is addressed.

The history refers to the captivity. Rachel was the common mother of Benjamin and Ephraim — Benjamin representing here the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which were united into one under the house of David; and Ephraim the ten tribes, commonly called Israel. Rachel's tomb was in Ramah, confines of both, on the border of Judah or Benjamin—on the border of Ephraim or Israel.

By a beautiful figure, the sorrows of the captivity are described as raising Rachel out of her grave to weep for the desolations of her sons. At Ramah Nebuzaradan called a council of war, and brought before him the captives. It seems to have been the first halting-place in the journey to Babylon. Jeremiah was present and witnessed the grief of the mothers of Israel; and, with the eye and imagination of a poet, calls Rachel from her grave to join the general grief, and ministers to them support and consolation by the promise of their return. And as their grief (parent-like) was more for their children than themselves, so the promise particularly respects *their* restoration and return. "*Thy children shall come again,*" if you do not; just as though the fathers fell in the wilderness, the children entered

Canaan. "*There is hope in thy posterity.*"

I. The consolations which the Gospel affords in this world.

II. The hopes which it furnishes for a better.

I. The consolations which the Gospel affords in this world.

1. *It is a world of weeping*, of disappointment, vicissitude, and trial; and afflictions are sent by God, not from severity and harshness, but to produce results nothing else could. It is the death of the *sin*, and not the death of the *soul*, God contemplates.

2. *The Gospel only furnishes consolation.* The world cannot. All the sounds of sympathy and tenderness come from another world. The only available consolation must bear this inscription, "*Thus saith the Lord.*" I said, Rachel was described as weeping for her *sons*, and Ephraim for his *sins:* these two constitute the great divisions of the sorrows of life: worldly, spiritual.

i. *Under worldly calamity, the Gospel provides consolation.* Losses, crosses.

1. The God that sends the trial sends the support with it, and often proportions the consolation to the distress. When He sends Rachel into captivity He gives her a promise to carry in her bosom.

2. The doctrine of God's providence is a greater support, and especially when we view the system of Providence as part of the plan of grace.

3. The promises of grace afford consolation, and show how minutely observant of the interests of His children God is.

4. The Christian is assured that there shall be no more suffering of any kind under the Divine government than is absolutely necessary to the well-being of His people. "*He doth not afflict,*" *etc.* While to the eye of bystanders the sufferer seems to have reached the extremity, an unseen Hand assuages the grief with unsuspected mitigations.

ii. *Under spiritual distress.* The sorrow for *sin.* "I have heard Ephraim," &c. No one else heard him or would have noticed him. But God did. Ephraim felt himself unobserved and alone. The sin that was heaviest upon his heart was the non-improvement of God's afflictive dispensations. We are first turned, and then repent.

Under these apprehensions the Gospel brings relief, by leading us to Christ, the sin-atoning Lamb. "*Behold* the Lamb;" "*Who is a God* like," &c. The Gospel proclaims pardon, reveals a full and ample relief.

II. The hopes the Gospel furnishes of a better life. "There is hope in thine end." As Israel was delivered from their captivity, so we shall be from ours. "*The ransomed shall return.*" The Gospel ministers largely to hope. It tells us the hour of conflict is succeeded by eternity of triumph. Here we are in a state of exile and bondage. . . . Heaven is complete deliverance—

i. *From the captivity of sin.* Here we are often in bondage to the power of evil; there, sin shall have no more dominion. A state of perfect holiness and perfect love.

ii. *From the captivity of Satan.* Wicked are led captive. Christians are exposed to his temptations; feel the mark of chain and fetter. Christ conquered Satan for us on the cross, shall dispossess him finally at death.

iii. *From the captivity of sorrow.* All tears wiped away.

iv. *From the captivity of death.*—*Anon.*

Ver. 18. *Theme:* DISCIPLINE. "I surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn Thou me, and I shall be turned: for Thou art the Lord my God."

There are chastisements in life which cannot be classed amongst great afflictions. There are little checks, daily disappointments, irritations, defeats, and annoyances—shadows which chequer what else would be a sunny way—things which themselves cannot be treated with dignity, yet they tease and wear the heart.

I. Human life is established upon a disciplinary basis. There is a "yoke" everywhere—in sin, in repentance, in grace. No one can have everything

just as he wants it. Man is made to feel that there is somebody in the world besides himself. He conceives a plan, and is laughed at for his pains; he tells his dream, and men suspect his vanity; he points out his high tower, and whilst his finger is lifted the mocking wind hurls the boasted masonry to the ground. So we are jostled, pulled back, and mortified. We are made to feel that our very life is a vapour, and that every respiration is but a compromise with death. We should ask ourselves the *meaning* of these things. Discipline touches the whole scheme: boy at school, going from home, bodily affliction, oversights and miscalculations, losses, &c.

II. **The value of discipline depends upon its right acceptance.** We may become *desperate* under it: "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Men may mourn, complain, rebel; they start arguments against God; they justify themselves; they become lost in secondary agencies and incomplete details.

Then there is a better way. "Ephraim *bemoaned* himself," repented before God, and said, "Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned." In this state of mind see—(1.) *Self-renunciation.* (2.) Devout and joyful confidence in God's sovereignty and graciousness.

Application—

1. There is a yoke in *sin.* "The way of transgressors is hard."

2. There is a yoke in *goodness.* It is often difficult to be upright, noble, holy.

3. God helps the true yoke-bearer: "My yoke is easy." We *must* bear a yoke; say, shall it be the bad yoke, or the yoke of Jesus Christ?—*Dr. Joseph Parker* ("*Pulpit Notes*").

Ver. 18. *Theme:* On Chastisement resulting in Penitence.

I. These words contain an acknowledgment. "Thou hast chastised me," &c.

1. This expression we conceive to denote *the inefficacy of former corrections.*

2. Though corrections are calculated to produce amendment, though such is their tendency and design, it is evident, from observation and experience, *they often fail in accomplishing the effect.*

3. Ephraim is here represented as *reflecting upon it.* (Proximate causes of the inefficacy of correction by itself).

4. *Inattention to the hand of God,* and, as a natural consequence, *their neglecting* to pass from *the contemplation of their sufferings to their sins.* Religion begins with consideration.

5. In the serious purpose of a religious life, formed under afflictive dispensations, too many *depend entirely upon resolutions formed in their own strength.*

To such purposes may be applied the beautiful image of Nahum: "And as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known."

II. **The prayer.** "Turn thou me." This may be enforced by such arguments as these—

1. *The plea of necessity.* There is no other resource.

2. To entreat God to turn is *not to ask an impossibility.* The residue of the Spirit is with Him.

3. It is *worthy of His interposition.* The turning of the heart is a fit occasion on which Omnipotence may act.

4. The plea may be enforced *by precedents.* It implies no departure from His known methods.

5. *We may force it by a reference to the Divine mercy.—Robert Hall.*

Ver. 18. *Theme:* Ephraim Bemoaning Himself. Heathen described their fabled deity, Jove, as sitting far aloft, regardless of the common affairs of this lower world. Not such is Jehovah: "I have surely heard Ephraim!"

Conceive the nearness of God to every mourning soul. He is the greatest of Comforters, and also the most approachable. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." See here—

I. **A sinner bemoaning himself.**

1. He was bowed down with *a peculiar grief.* Not as Rachel "for her children;" for nothing outside of him-

self, but "bemoaning *himself.*" Inward sorrow, true repentance.

2. Such godly sorrow is *well-founded sorrow.* Over guilt, outrage on God's goodness and grace, &c.

3. This sorrow is *humble sorrow.* Not *excusing* himself, or *flattering* himself, or making new resolutions; but "bemoaning himself." Self-abhorrence. "I have sinned!"

4. A *thoughtful sorrow.* For Ephraim reviews his past life: "Thou hast chastised me." What came of it? "I was chastised," and that was all! See, hence, that affliction, providences, &c., will not save your soul; you need effectual grace.

5. A *hopeless*, yet a *hopeful*, *sorrow.* Ephraim says, Lord, it is useless to chastise me, I only get worse; but do Thou *turn me*, and I shall be turned."

Then think of—

II. The Lord observing him. Some hide yourselves when pricked in your consciences. But the Lord finds you out. Mothers! how quickly you find out, even in the night, if your child is ill.

1. *God heard all Ephraim had to say.* It may be but a stammering cry; but broken prayers are the best prayers.

2. *God delights in the broken heart* and contrite spirit. "I have *surely* heard Ephraim *bemoaning himself.*" If He should not hear the music of heaven, He certainly would hear the prayers of penitents.

3. Our God is *full of compassion.* He gave Ephraim what he asked. "Ye shall not seek His face in vain."

III. The Lord working in His effectual grace.

1. The only turning in the world that is saving and divine, is *the turning of the heart.*

2. The Lord's way of turning men *varies in each case*—

(1.) A *distinct sight of wrath to come* stops a sinner.

(2.) Or the awakened conscience is led to *see the real nature of sin.*

(3.) The grand turning-point is a *sight of Christ on the cross.*

(4.) One of the most blessed ways by which God makes a sinner turn is, *He manifests His everlasting love to him.*

(*a.*) Are you *bemoaning yourself?*

(*b.*) *Breathe the prayer*, "Turn me, O Lord."—*C. H. Spurgeon*, 1867.

Ver. 18. *Theme:* TRUE REPENTANCE. "I surely heard Ephraim," &c.

I. What feeling it expresses on the part of the returning penitent.

1. Mark the *depth and intensity* of his penitential emotions.

2. His *total absence* of all attempts *at self-justification.*

3. The *promptitude and decision* with which he acts up to his own convictions (ver. 19).

4. His *concern to surrender himself* to those Divine influences to which he already owed so much: "Turn Thou me."

II. What illustrations it exhibits of God's revealed character. It accords with other Scriptures: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out," &c.; "As I live, I have no pleasure," &c.

1. *The essential and inherent compassion* of the Divine nature.

2. *His knowledge of the constitution of the human mind:* attracted by kindness; repelled by severity.

3. His *minute and condescending regard* to the growth and progress of religious emotion. "I have heard."

4. His *infinite readiness to receive and pardon* the returning sinner.

5. He reinstates the penitent in those privileges which sin had forfeited.

Vers. 18–20. *Theme:* A PENITENT'S REFLECTIONS AND GOD'S REFLECTIONS OVER HIM.

A wide difference between ostentation and true piety. The sincere penitent desires privacy. God here declares how acceptable is such repentance.

I. The reflections of a true penitent over himself.

1. The *beginning* of his repentance. He—

(1.) Reflects on *his incorrigibleness in the ways of sin.*

(2.) *Pleads with God to turn and convert his soul.*

2. The *progress* of his repentance.

(1.) He reflects upon the *advancing distress of his soul.* *Amazed*—"smote on thigh;" then "ashamed;" then "even confounded."

(2.) But he *gives the glory of his advancement to God alone.* It all resulted from the fact that "I *was* turned."

II. **The reflections of God over a true penitent.** The penitent finds no words too severe against himself; but—

1. *God accounts no honour too great for such a person.* He owns him to be "a dear and pleasant child."

2. He *expresses His compassionate regard for him.* "My bowels are troubled for him."

3. *He grants him all he himself could desire.* "I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

Can God testify *of us* as of Ephraim? If *not*, we must expect shame and confusion (Matt. xiii. 49, 50). If He *can*, happiness will be ours here and hereafter (Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6). — *Claude's Simeon.*

Vers. 18–20. *Theme:* THE STUBBORN SINNER SUBMITTING HIMSELF TO GOD.

I. A description of the feelings and conduct of an obstinate, impenitent sinner while smarting under the rod of affliction. He is rebellious — till subdued.

II. The new views and feelings produced by affliction through Divine grace.

(*a.*) Convinced of guilt and sinfulness; (*b.*) praying; (*c.*) reflecting on the effects of Divine grace in his conversion.

III. A correcting and compassionate God watching the results, &c.

(*a.*) As a tender Father, mindful of His penitent child; (*b.*) Listening to his complaints and petitions; (*c.*) declaring His determination to pardon.—*Payson.*

See Addenda: CONFESSION.

With vers. 18, 19, comp. Homilies on chap. iii. 21–25.

Notes on vers. 18–20.

i. "THOU HAST CHASTISED ME, AND I WAS CHASTISED." In the first clause the chastisement itself is meant; in the second, the *beneficial effects* of it—in teaching the penitent true wisdom.

ii. "AS A BULLOCK UNACCUSTOMED" (*cf.* "stiffnecked" Acts vii. 51; Exod. xxxii. 9), an image from *refractory* oxen. Before my chastisement *I needed the severe correction* I received, as much as an untamed bullock needs the goad (*cf.* Acts ix. 5, where the same figure is used of Saul *before he was converted*).

iii. "TURN THOU ME, AND I SHALL BE TURNED;" by Thy converting Spirit (Lam. v. 21).

But why does Ephraim *pray for conversion*, seeing that he is *already converted?* Because we are *converted by progressive steps*, and need the same power of God to *carry forward*, as to *originate*, our conversion (John vi. 44, 65; *cf.* Isa. xxvii. 3; 1 Pet. i. 5; Phil. i. 6).

iv. "AFTER THAT I WAS TURNED I REPENTED." Repentance in the full sense *follows*, not precedes, our being turned *to* God *by* God (Zech. xii. 10). Repentance is the tear that flows from the eye of faith turned to Jesus. Himself gives it; we give it not of ourselves, but must come to Him for it (Acts v. 31).

v. "AFTER I WAS INSTRUCTED, I SMOTE UPON MY THIGH." Made to learn by chastisement. God's Spirit often works through the corrections of His providence. "Smote," &c. (Ezek. xxi. 12): a token of remorse, shame, and grief because of past sin.

vi. "I DID BEAR THE REPROACH OF MY YOUTH." The punishments I bore were the just punishments of my scandalous wantonness against God in my youth; alluding to the idols set up at Dan and Bethel immediately after the ten tribes revolted from Judah. His sense of *shame* shows he *no longer delights* in his sin.—*Jamieson.*

Ver. 20. *Theme:* GOD'S TENDER MEMORY OF THE SINNER. "Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant

child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

See Homily on chap. ii. 2: "AN UNFORGOTTEN PAST," pp. 41, 42, and Noticeable Topic, EARLY PIETY THE BEAUTY OF YOUTH, p. 50.

These questions—"Is Ephraim," &c. —imply that a *negative* reply might naturally follow. Oh! who could have imagined that, after all this undutifulness, the Father could still regard him as a "*pleasant* child"?

I. Our sin is enough to estrange the heart of God from us.

II. Yet the Divine heart is tenacious of its cherished child. "How can I give thee up?" "I do earnestly remember him still."

III. Human alienation from God is not oblivion with God. Ephraim might be indifferent to the God he had revolted from and wronged: "God *not in all his thoughts;*" but God could not forget—"I do *earnestly* remember." God cannot bury in forgetfulness the child He loves. He "*so* loved the world," &c.

IV. Infinite grace is intent upon the recovery of the alien child.

1. "My bowels are troubled." God's *restless yearning* for his return.

2. "I do earnestly remember." "While he was *yet a great way* off the father saw him."

3. "I will surely have mercy." *Quick to relent* the moment he repents. God is in no doubt as to how He will receive the sinner. "The father *ran*, and had compassion upon him, and *kissed* him."

Ver. 21. *Theme:* SHEWING EXILES THE WAY HOME. "Set up way-marks."

Keep the lights burning. Lift up the cross! Preach the Gospel still. Declare the precious promises.

I. "Way-marks" would be needed. For they *should* return from exile.

It is a prophecy. Souls who go astray *may* return; many *shall*.

II. "Way-marks" would be helpful. For their *long banishment* might *obliterate the path* and obliterate *their remembrance*. For long absence from God does make the way of right *difficult to find*.

III. "Way-marks" would be remembrancers, testimonies that God *promised* their return; for, seeing these "way-marks," they would *recall His promises* and *rejoice in His faithfulness and grace*.

Ver. 21. *Theme:* A RIGHTLY DIRECTED PURPOSE. "Set thine heart toward the highway."

I. There is but one way back to God. "I am the *Way*, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by Me."

II. Misleading paths decoy the steps astray. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man," &c.; ways of *self-reform, sacramental efficacy*, &c.

III. A heart intent upon the way marked out *for our return to God.*

Determined to tread it. Resolute to walk in *none other*. Earnest to be found *therein quickly*.

Ver. 22. *Theme:* A NEW-CREATED WONDER: THE MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION OF CHRIST. "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth: *a woman shall compass a man.*"

For other interpretations of the words, see Lit. Crit. *supra*.

The words naturally and easily read thus:—Why longer "*go about*" looking *everywhere, anywhere* for helpers, as if crying, "Who will show us any good?" leaning on any helpful contingencies which may perchance offer themselves? *Stay your hopes on Jehovah;* for He has *not exhausted His wonderful resources for Israel and humanity*. A *new era* approaches—of grace in Christ Jesus. A *new creation* shall mark that era—the Incarnation of Christ; when the Virgin Woman shall compass a Man, and give birth to "the Man Christ Jesus."

The ancient Jews acknowledged this interpretation, and *applied the words determinately to the Messiah*.

Augustine and most of the Christian fathers regarded the verse as predicting the event of the *Virgin Mary compassing Christ in her womb*.

i. *The event was to be* WHOLLY UNPRE-

CEDENTED. "A new thing in the earth," and a special Divine "*creation.*" Thus Mary "was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. i. 18–20). It was an event out of the ordinary course of nature.

ii. PROPHECY HARMONISED *with the fact described.* The first evangelical promise described Christ as "the Seed of the *woman,*" not of *man.* So Isa. vii. 14, "*A Virgin* shall conceive."

iii. *There is a* SPECIFIC PERSONALITY *in the words,* "A woman—a man." Both distinct; not *any* "woman," not an *ordinary* "man;" but definite, solitary. The *Hebrew* rendered here "*woman*" means an *individual,* and is not the word for "woman" collectively and in plurality. So the *Hebrew* rendered "*man*" is properly "*mighty* MAN," the *Geber;* and Christ is called in Isa. ix. 6, *El Gibbôr.* (See also the word in Deut. x. 17; Zech. xiii. 7; and *cf.* Ps. xlv. 3.)

iv. The LOCALISATION OF THE EVENT helps this interpretation. "A new thing *in the earth;*" literally, in "*the land,*" viz., of Judah, where Christ's *conception* occurred (*cf.* Luke i. 39, 41).

v. An occult allusion to the SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS IN BETHLEHEM associates this prediction with the Incarnation. See on ver. 14.

vi. Such a Messianic promise more fully explains the LONGING OF THE EXILES TO RETURN TO THEIR LAND, because Emmanuel should be born there.

vii. *The prophet's vision* is through all these verses DIRECTED ON TO THE GOSPEL AGE, when "the new covenant" (ver. 29 *seq.*) shall dawn upon the world, of which the *Incarnate Christ* should be the "Alpha and the Omega."

Vers. 23, 24. Comp. Homily on chap. iii. 17, 18.

Ver. 25. "*Satiated the weary soul.*" Comp. ver. 14.

Ver. 26. *Theme:* SWEET VISIONS OF HUMAN GOOD. "My sleep was sweet unto me." "*My sleep*"—my prophetic dream. It was a *rare experience* with Jeremiah to have visions so "sweet;" for usually his messages concerning "the Divine intent" were pensive and sad.

i. *Happy outlooks for a woestricken world are sweetest to the Divine seer.*

ii. *There are gleams of day glory breaking the grim night of the world's distress.*

iii. *It is in God's purposes of grace, as distinct from man's conduct of sinfulness, that these glad visions of good are possible.*

Vers. 29, 30. *Theme:* EATING SOUR GRAPES: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Popular sentiments, though crystallised into proverbs, may be misleading. Therefore "*prove* all things," &c. Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah mention this as a proverb in currency. See, with ver. 29, Ezek. xviiii. 2–4.

A law on Sinai that God would "visit the sins of the fathers upon their children."

In *distinction from the old covenant,* a new dispensation was coming in which INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY should prevail as the law.

I. Facts in the Divine economy and procedure warranting this prevailing sentiment. "The *fathers have eaten* a sour grape, and the *children's teeth* are set on edge."

1. *Man's inherited misery through Adam's fall* (Rom. v. 12–14, 18, 19).

2. *Great calamities were allowed to engulf the children in the ruin merited only by the fathers.*

The Deluge; overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; destruction of "families" of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, together with themselves. So, for David's sin in numbering the people, 70,000 of his subjects were slain, himself spared. Manasseh (2 Kings xxiii. 26, 27; xxiv. 3, 4). On the Jewish nation too (Matt. xxiii. 34).

3. In *civil* and *social* relations the conduct of governors and parents casts its results on the children.

II. A spirit of sinful repining which cast blame upon God. The Jews intended to—

1. *Exonerate themselves* for their misfortunes. They implied that for *no sin of their own* were they suffering.

2. *Reflect on the wisdom and justice of God.* But surely God punishes us less than our iniquities deserve (Ezra ix. 13). Even the *lost* souls must own God just (Rev. xvi. 7). And the day of retribution will prove itself to be "a revelation of the *righteous* judgment of God" (Rom. ii. 5).

III. A new era announced of individual responsibility and judgment.

1. God declares what shall be *His settled rule of procedure* (ver. 30). (1.) *National and all-embracing judgments shall cease.* (2.) *Each soul shall stand on its own merits* and bear its own responsibility.

2. This law of individuality is to be *verified*—(1.) In *this life* (Gal. vi. 5); (2.) In the *future world* (Gal. vi. 7, 8).

IV. The awful burden of inevitable personal guilt.

1. Every man *must give account of himself,* and meet his just condemnation. For—

2. There is *none who can stand before God without sin.* And

3. Every sinner shall *die his due death* (ver. 30).

4. Can there be found *no Sin-Bearer?* Yes verily; Christ died "the Just for the unjust" (1 Peter iii. 18); was "made sin for us" (2 Cor. v. 21). And so we *lose our individual curse* in the atonement and substitution of Calvary.

Vers. 31–34. *Theme:* SALVATION TAKEN INTO GOD'S OWN HANDS. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake; though I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and *will* be their God, and they *shall* be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

It is useful to contemplate the duties devolving on us as agents, and the hopes arising from the agency of God. Our text refers to the latter. The old covenant was made with the Hebrews at Sinai, the covenant of grace under types; not an absolute but a conditional covenant, and in this it resembled the law. As a consequence, it is added, "which covenant they brake." But it pleased God to promise a new covenant. In this He shows His own agency on the heart, and takes salvation into His own hands to accomplish it Himself: "They *shall* be My people and I *will* be their God." Had a covenant of works been held out offering salvation upon perfect obedience, or a covenant offering pardon to man unassisted, none would have been saved. Both were tried, in Eden and at Sinai. The covenant made with Abraham still exists. Let us show—

I. *According to the plan of grace revealed in the Gospel,* GOD HAS TAKEN THE WORK OF SALVATION INTO HIS OWN HANDS.

II. THIS LAYS THE ONLY FOUNDATION FOR HOPE.

I. According to plan of grace in Gospel, **God has taken the work of salvation into His own hands.** The great design *originated in the mind of God,* it was His own choice and purpose, induced by a regard for His own glory and compassion for a sinful world. He organised the plan *alone.* Eternal ages before man *was,* the covenant of redemption between the Sacred Persons was formed, and all circumstances relating to the salvation of the world were settled. Man was then made, and fell; when an intimation of the purpose was made to him. Jesus Christ came in due time to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He rose from the dead for our justification. All this was done by God independently of His creatures. The Holy Spirit was sent out to subdue as many as the Father had given Christ. Through human instrumentality the world was enlightened by the preaching

of the Word. The creation, care, support, and enlargement of the Christian Church was undertaken by the Trinity. *In like manner God takes the salvation of every believer individually into His own hands.*

II. *That God has taken the* work of delivering *His own people into His own hands,* is the only foundation of human hope. This doctrine is sweet to the Christian, but opposed by the proud; for had not God contrived and executed this plan, no provision could have been made for the salvation of man; and, beset as he is from without and within, he can only find help from the God of his salvation.

1. *The Christian who feels his own weakness, and discerns the power of his enemies, resorts to this truth as the only ground for hope.* "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord," and they feel that God can shield them from *every enemy.*

2. *Those who would rather trust themselves than God, reject this truth;* while the only encouragement for Christians to "work out their own salvation" is that "God worketh *in them.*"

3. *This doctrine also affords encouragement to the Church generally.* While looking upon the many who know not God, we can be sustained by nothing but the trust that the work of saving men is God's work alone. In commending our loved ones to God, we feel peace in the knowledge that "God has taken their salvation into His own hands." *Ministers* of God's people, be content to leave their salvation there; it is His work and His cause. *Pious and trembling* ones, dwell upon this truth to your comfort; and to the *unrenewed* I would say, remember you are in God's hands. Return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.—*Ancient MS.*

Ver. 32. "*Which covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them.*" Comp. Homily on chap. iii. 14.

Ver. 33. *The new covenant.* Comp. Homily on chap. iii. 16.

Ver. 32. *Theme:* IS THE OLD COVENANT ABANDONED? "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers."

I. The covenant God made at the first with His people is not contradicted and destroyed *by the new.*

1. God had *not changed His purpose,* as if he had forgotten His faithfulness. The first covenant with Abraham was inviolable.

2. The *law was a confirmation of, and based upon, that covenant.* Consequently, God can make no new law inconsistent with the old.

3. Christians, under the new covenant, *are partakers of that old and original Abrahamic covenant,* are called "children of Abraham;" will be "gathered into Abraham's bosom;" and shall "come from the east and west," &c., "and sit *down with Abraham,*" &c.

These considerations show that God never abrogated the covenant made with Abraham and confirmed by and to Moses.

II. In what sense God has made a "new covenant" *with His people.* Here premising that—

1. The *substance,* or *doctrine, remains the same;* for God in the Gospel brings forward nothing but what the law contains. But—

2. In the *form,* or *expression of the doctrine, all is new.* Thus *Christ,* as *substitute; Holy Spirit's renewing grace;* and the *whole method of teaching* men God's will: these are new.

(*a.*) Thus, God made a new covenant when *He accomplished through His Son* what had been foreshadowed forth under the law.

(*b.*) Further, it was a new thing that God, *by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit,* made the covenant, not only strike the ear, *but penetrate the heart.*

(*c.*) *The outward mode of teaching* is also new; for, comparing the law with the Gospel, we find that *God speaks to us openly* now, as it were face to face (2 Cor. iii. 13); for the veil is removed, and *God in the face of Christ presents Himself* to be seen by us.—*Arranged from Calvin.*

Ver. 33. *Theme:* "MY LAW IN THEIR HEARTS."

No longer a Sinaitic code of morals,

external to man and enforced upon him; but an inner force, an inspiration of love, constraining the soul into sweet consent. The sermon on the mount is the old Mosaic law—but *transfigured by love;* speaking to the very heart of man in tones of mighty tenderness.

I. If God's commandments are to sway *the whole being* of a man, they *must* move the inmost affections.

1. "Laws," which only speak to the ear, and demand an unwilling attention, can affect men but feebly. But the voice of God is powerful in a soul when it finds its way inward to the affections, and speaks in tones which stir the *keenest and strongest emotions.*

2. The "*new covenant*" laws are voices of *love* from God, full of infinite tenderness and grace, and go deeper into the soul than commandments; they are more penetrating than a mother's words. God speaks *to the heart* in the Gospel.

3. These *laws of love*—"Thou shalt *love* the Lord," &c.; for "God is love"—which constitute the Gospel covenant, *do rule the soul from within* by the impulses and affections which they awaken. "*We love Him*, because He first loved us." His laws are impressed *upon our very hearts.*

II. If man's obedience to God is to be complete—the obedience of a willing soul, glad to obey—the inmost affections must move him thereto.

1. "*Duty*" is cold and hard as an inspiration to conduct. It *awakens no enthusiasm*, no delight, no eager volition in the soul. It enforces itself *upon* us, not awakens response *within* us.

2. But "laws" (interpreted and emphasised as they are in *the life of Jesus*—calling us to *obedience for love of Him*, and inspired with grandeur as they are in *the cross of Christ*—declaring the infinite importance to the sinner that he should *not sin*, but should obey and live)—laws of God thus enforced *cast their pathos upon the heart of even the disobedient* and stir to response.

3. The affections won by Christ's personally *obedient example* and substitutionary death for *man's disobedience*, prompt the soul to willing anxious concern to do the will of God with fervour and delight. His laws are obeyed *from the heart.*

III. Hence, love awakened within a soul is a grander force and a surer guarantee of full obedience to law than the *sense of* duty *however majestically enforced.*

1. The *cross* raised on Calvary is therefore *a grander motive* than the tables of stone given on Sinai.

2. Humanity can be *drawn into allegiance to God* more effectually and surely by the allurements of love than by the demands and threatenings of law.

3. The new covenant, therefore, *supersedes the reign of penalty*, with its appeals to duty and fear, *by the reign of grace*, in which the heart is won to glad obedience, inspired by gratitude and love.

Ver. 34. *Theme:* UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord."

1. Its primary application is to the *enlightenment of Israel.* They shall know *Christ* as the Lord (Isa. liv. 13).

2. Its secondary reference is *to all believers*, who come to see Christ for themselves as their Saviour, Lord, and God (John vi. 45; 1 Cor. ii. 10; 1 John ii. 2, 20).

3. Its widest meaning is the *ingathering of all people* to the "one faith" (Ps. ii. 8).

I. By a Divine plan of instruction men shall be taught.

1. It is slow and feeble work this *winning men by man's teaching.*

2. *Not that the office of teaching will cease* under the Gospel dispensation.

3. But *the Divine Spirit will become the world's Teacher*, showing Christ to men.

4. And a purer light will by that Spirit shine in upon the human conscience, revealing to the sinner more clearly his state, his need, and the remedy of the cross.

II. With an all-embracing inclusiveness men shall be taught.

1. *National barriers and distinctions shall no longer limit* the spread of true religion. The Gospel shall be "unto *all* people."

2. *Social and educational divisions shall be utterly disregarded* in the Divine diffusion of light. "Things despised" will be equally blessed with Divine light —"the *least* of them" as "things mighty"—"the *greatest* of them." For "God is no respecter of persons."

3. *Childhood shall gather under the lustre of Christian knowledge* as much as maturity; for Christ shall enfold the lambs, and the "little ones" shall be in "the kingdom of heaven"—"the *least* of them."

III. **Into a clearer knowledge of God** men shall be led. "All shall *know Me.*"

1. *Sinai's revelations* and Prophecy's dim teachings *failed to reveal God fully* to the soul. They were but faint gleamings (Exod. xxxiii. 23).

2. *The Person of Christ*—His life, teachings, character, and death—*unveils God clearly to man* (John i. 18).

3. *By the Spirit's illumination* a familiar, happy, and satisfactory *realisation of God is brought to each believing soul* (1 John ii. 27).

Vers. 35–37. *Theme:* GOD'S GUARANTEE TO HIS CHURCH. In prophecy we see the purposes of God unfolded, and, comparing past and passing events, see God so ordering every incident for the fulfilment of His purposes. Note—

i. With what majesty and glory the *Almighty describes Himself!*

ii. With what solemnity *He enforces His declarations,* equivalent even to oaths!

iii. And all this in order *to assure His people* of His exhaustless and inalienable mercy!

I. *Contemplate the grandeur of these* assurances of Jehovah to His people.

1. In their historic reference to *Israel literally.*

(1.) Their *imperishable security;* they shall *always be under His care.* So that, while other nations have become obliterated, *they shall never be.* Though their sins provoked Him to utterly cast them off, *they should be restored to His favour* as of old.

(2.) *God's infinite resources on their behalf.* "The Lord, which giveth the sun," &c.; the *almightiness* of Jehovah; "the Lord of Hosts is His name."

(3.) *The inviolability of God's covenant* with them. If *impossibilities* can be, "the heavens be measured," &c., then *this impossibility* may happen, that God would sever His people from Himself, the people He betrothed in an everlasting covenant!

Note:—*History confirms these ancient assurances of God to Israel.* During their captivity in Babylon the nation kept its nationality intact, and were restored to Canaan. And even now, though for 1800 years Israel and Judah are scattered, God preserves them "a peculiar people;" and signs are not wanting that the "lost" ten tribes are still in distinct existence.

They are still "beloved for the fathers' sake;" and God's "gifts and calling are without repentance" (Isa. liv. 7–10).

2. In their larger application to *the Church of God spiritually.*

(1.) *Guarded by the unfailing care of the Lord.* "The gates of hell shall not prevail;" "Not one of them shall be lost."

(2.) *All the guarantees of Deity are pledged* to its security. "My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of My Father's hand: I and My Father are one!"

(3.) *With inviolable fidelity* Christ's people are bound to Him. Not a jot or tittle of His word shall fail: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

II. *Ponder the* value of these assurances of Jehovah to His people. *To Israel* indeed literally belongs these "covenants and promises;" yet *Christians* have a joint heritage in them; for Paul assures us that "God, willing more abundantly to show *unto the heirs of promise* the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two

immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we* might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before *us*" (Heb. vi. 17, 18).

1. *By whom*, then, may these assurances be appropriated? "All the promises of God are *in Christ*, Yea; and *in Him*, Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Only those who are "*in Christ*" themselves can "inherit the promises" which are assured *in Him*.

2. *For what purposes* should these assurances be appropriated? For our *enduring consolation* amid all distresses, persecutions, &c. (Rom. viii. 35–39); yet *not* for *delusive self-security* and *presumption*. Unless we *keep ourselves distinct* from the world, as do the Jews as a nation, but distinct for *our piety* (2 Cor. vi. 17; James i. 27), we forfeit all part in the assurance that God will keep us perpetually before Him as His people.

3. *In what spirit*, then, should these assurances be appropriated? With *faith* in God's word (John xiv. 1); with *joyous hope* (Rom. v. 2); with *lowly watchfulness* (Rom. xi. 20).

Compare with the above *Simeon's Outline*, on which this is based.

Vers. 38, 39. *Theme:* THE REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM, BOTH LITERALLY AND SPIRITUALLY.

Wordsworth here points out—

I. *The city is here said to be built* to the Lord (ver. 38). It is dedicated to Him. The Church (κυριακή) is the house of the *Lord*. It is called by His name, consecrated to His glory and service. Its name is *Jehovah Shammah*, "The Lord is there" (Ezek. xlviii. 35).

II. Taken in its literal sense, this prophecy foretels that Jerusalem shall be rebuilt in all its extent, from the tower of Hanameel, on the north-east (see Neh. iii. 1; xii. 39) to the gate of the corner, on the north-west (2 Kings xiv. 13; 2 Chron. xxvi. 9). Comp. Zech. xiv. 10. This was *effected by Nehemiah*.

III. But this was *figurative of the greater rebuilding*, when Jesus Christ built up the ruins of our fallen nature, and raised up the walls of the spiritual Jerusalem, His universal Church.

1. The names *Hanameel* and *Gate of the Corner* have a *symbolical* sense, suited to this fulfilment. "Hanameel" = *graciously given by God*. The building of the spiritual Jerusalem (so Jerome suggests) begins with the *free grace of God* (Titus ii. 11–14; iii. 4–8), and extends to the gate of the *Corner*, Christ being the elect "Corner-stone;" for He is the "Corner" in which the walls of both peoples—Jew and Gentile—meet in one, cemented together in Him (Ps. cxviii. 22; Isa. xxviii. 16; Matt. xxi. 42; 1 Peter iii. 6).

2. Similarly the names "hill *Gareb* and *Goath*" have a *symbolical* significance. These names are nowhere found in Scripture, and have no actual localisation; the reason, therefore, for the choice of such names is that we should *not look to the letter but to the spirit* [!] Mystical names were thus sometimes used by prophets (Cant. ii. 17, vi. 12; Jer. xxv. 26; Ezek. xxxix. 11, &c.)

But "*Gareb*" means a *leper*, and leprosy was a *type of sin*; while "*Goath*" is supposed by some to be the same as *Golgotha* or Calvary. *Leprosy is the ban of death*; but Christ by death "*abolished death*," whereas on Calvary was opened "the fountain *for sin*," and so *sin* and *death* found a remedy in Christ.

Thus the *Christian Church*, which has its origin and centre in Zion, *extends its walls* with a living and gracious energy to enfold the hill *Gareb*, and even *Goath* itself.

IV. Further, in ver. 40, it is affirmed that "*the whole valley of the dead bodies*"—the loathsome and idolatrous valley of Hinnom, and even "*all the fields unto the brook Kidron*"—to which all the abominations of idolatry were brought and burned (2 Kings xxxii. 4–6), *i.e.*, all things *most unclean by nature* and *by human corruption*, will be purged from all impurity, and cleansed by the blood of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit of holiness in the Christian Church, and so be made "*holy unto the Lord*" (Zech. xiv. 20, 21; Joel iii. 17; Isa. lii. 1, &c.)

This has been fulfilled, and is in

course of fulfilment in the transformation of heathen basilicas and temples (as the Pantheon of Rome and the Parthenon of Theseus at Athens) into *Christian Churches*, and the conversion of heathen cities and nations unto Christ. The cross of Christ stands in the Colosseum, where Christian martyrs were formerly cast to the lions; and it surmounts the obelisks of Egypt; and human nature, once the stronghold of Satan, has now become the shrine of Deity by the incarnation of the Son of God.—*Wordsworth's Commentary.*

Note.—Dr. Payne Smith remarks: "The main point in Jeremiah's description of the New Jerusalem is not its great extent, though it would have covered somewhat more space than the old city, and much more than Nehemiah included within his walls, but that it *took in and consecrated spots which previously had been unclean.* If we compare this with Zech. ii. 4, the conclusion seems evident that Jeremiah's words are to be *spiritually* understood. His city is one that renders what was before unclean 'holy unto Jehovah.' (Comp. with this John's New Jerusalem, especially Rev. xxi. 27.)"

Ver. 40. THE PERPETUITY OF THE SPIRITUAL JERUSALEM. "It shall not be plucked up nor thrown down any more for ever."

Calvin comments: "The promise of *perpetual favour* is added; for it would not be sufficient to have God's mercy promised us for a short time. The *city* indeed was again destroyed by Titus, and at length wholly demolished by Adrian; but God gave some taste of His favour, in the external aspect of the city, till Christ came; but after Christ was manifested, *the heavenly Jerusalem* became the object to be sought, and *then all types and shadows ceased.*

"This promise pledges *the perpetuity of the Church;* for though God may permit it to be terribly shaken, and Satan and all the world may daily threaten its ruin, yet the Lord will preserve it to the end, so that it shall never perish."

ADDENDA TO CHAP. XXXI.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 3. EVERLASTING LOVE. A father, whose affluence was considerable, mourned over a reckless son, whose misconduct brought shame upon himself and family. From home the prodigal went into another country, and for years he was lost to his relatives. A chance occurring, he sent by a friend this message, should he meet his boy, "*Your father loves you still.*" The bearer sought him long and in vain. At last he saw him enter a house of vice, and called him; and there, at a late hour of evening, he delivered this message. The dissolute gambler's heart was touched. The thought that his father still loved him, and wished to forgive him, broke the spell of Satan. He abandoned his profligacy and returned to his father. Oh! the power of such a message of inalienable love from God!

"Could we with ink the ocean fill,
Were the whole world of parchment made,
Were every single grass a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade:
To write the love
Of God above
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll
Contain the whole,
Though stretched from earth to sky."

"Not as the world loves doth God love. They love to-day and hate to-morrow, wearing their friends like flowers, which we may behold in their bosoms whilst they are fresh and sweet, but soon they wither and then are laid aside. Whereas the love of God to His people is everlasting, and He wears them as a signet upon His right hand, which He will never part with."—*White.*

Ver. 9. TEARS OF PENITENCE. A saint's tears are better than a sinner's triumphs. Bernard saith, *Lachrymæ pœnitentium sunt vinum angelorum:* "The tears of penitents are the wine of angels."—*Secker.*

Ver. 18. CONFESSION: "*Bemoaning himself.*" If I am working beside a man, and I see that he tries to shirk his work upon me, I am angry with him. But if he says to me, "I am ill and cannot work," then the thought comes to me at once, "You shall not work; I will help you." And so, if a man says to us, "I know I did wrong, but I am weak; blame me as little as you can, but help me out as much as you can"—the very confession disarms us, and we think better of him than we did before. Therefore it is that God so exhorts us to confess our sins to Him.
—*H. Ward Beecher.*

"All-powerful is the penitential sigh
Of true contrition; like the placid wreaths
Of incense, wafted from the righteous shrine
Where Abel ministered, to the blest seat
Of Mercy, an accepted sacrifice,
Humiliation's conscious plaint ascends."
—*Hayes.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—**1. Chronology of the Chapter.**—"Tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, and eighteenth of Nebuchadnezzar" (ver. 1). *Cf.* note on chronology of chap. xxv.: "this eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar" was about B.C. 585; or, according to the Chaldean cylinders, B.C. 564.

2. Contemporary Scriptures.—Chaps. xxxix., xl., lii. 4, 5, &c.; 1 Kings xxv.; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17, *seq.*; Ezek. xxiv.

3. National Affairs.—The siege of Jerusalem began in the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, and was now going on; but, on the approach of Pharaoh's army from Egypt, the siege was temporarily raised (chap. xxxvii. 5). Jeremiah made an attempt to leave the city during this crisis (xxxvii. 13), and was arrested, being afterwards kept prisoner till the siege was over. Many in Jerusalem hoped that Egypt would prevail over the Chaldean power; but Jeremiah declared that the Chaldeans must be supreme; and, as being distrusted for his anti-Egyptian prophecies, was kept in the prison of the king's house.

4. Contemporaneous History.—The Chaldeans besieged Jerusalem the year preceding the date of this chapter. For a brief while this siege was interrupted by the arrival at Jerusalem of the succour of the Egyptian forces, then resumed with increased vigour. This Egyptian army was led by Pharaoh-Hophra (see chap. xliv. 30), the Apries of Herodotus (ii. 116, iv. 159). He was an ally of Zedekiah against "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon" (vers. 2, 3); we learn this from Ezekiel xvii. 15, but the alliance was fruitless, and this attack upon Nebuchadnezzar's besieging army ended in either the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces or their defeat by the Chaldeans.

5. Geographical References.—Ver. 7. "*Anathoth;*" and Ver. 8. "*Anathoth in the country of Benjamin:*" *cf.* Geographical References on chap. i. It was a sacerdotal city, and so had 1000 cubits of suburban fields outside the walls attached to it (Num. xxxv. 4, 5). These fields might not be sold out of the Levitical tribe (xxv. 34). Ver. 35. "*High places of Baal in the valley of Hinnom:*" *cf.* notes on chaps. vii. 31, xxix. 5.

6. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 7. "*Hanameel* the son of Shallum thine uncle." Jeremiah's first cousin; nothing more known of him. Ver. 12. "*Baruch the son of Neriah.*" Jeremiah's amanuensis and agent (xxxvi. 4, &c.).

7. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 7. "*The right of redemption is thine.*" On the failure of the owner it fell to the next of kin to redeem it (Lev. xxv. 25; Ruth iv. 3–6). Ver. 9. "*Weighed him the money,*" &c. Coined money was not then in use, therefore "weighed" as in the days of Abraham (Gen. xxiii. 16). The "*seven shekels and ten of silver*" (as it literally reads) = £2, 2s. 6d. of our money; but its purchasing value may be estimated by remembering that David bought Araunah's threshing floor, oxen, and implements, for "fifty shekels;" while "thirty shekels of silver" purchased the potter's field (Matt. xxvii. 7). Ver. 11. "*The evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open.*" So that there was one *purchase-deed* duly sealed and closed up—the legal document, and *a copy* for "open" reference. Ver. 24. "*The mounts are come unto the city;*" mounds of earth, batteries, or breastworks for the besieging army, behind which they employed their engines. Ver. 29. "*Upon the roof they have offered incense to Baal:*" *cf.* chap. xix. 13. Ver. 33. "*Turned the back and not the face:*" *cf.* on chap. ii. 27.

8. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 10. "*I subscribed the evidence:*" Heb. *I wrote* (the facts of the purchase) *in the deed.* Ver. 25. "*For* the city is," &c.; rather, "*Whereas* the city," &c. Ver. 40. "*A covenant with them to do them good.*" Omit comma after "not turn away from them," and read on, "not turn away from them to do them good;" *i.e. never cease.*

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER XXXII.

A PARABOLIC PURCHASE, signifying and predicting Israel's *sure repossession of the land* from which they were to be for a time exiled.

i. *The account of the transaction;* executed with *publicity*, and the trust-deed carefully preserved (vers. 1–15).

ii. *Jeremiah's confession of misgivings*, notwithstanding his assuring purchase (vers. 16–25).

iii. *God's explanation of the course of events*, and promises of the certain restoration of Israel (vers. 26–44).

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 2. JEREMIAH IMPRISONED.

He *was* there "in the tenth year of Zedekiah" (ver. 1); but was *put* there in the ninth year of Zedekiah. The facts occurred thus: As a punishment for foretelling the capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah was put into the king's prison (xxxiv. 1–7). At the interruption of the siege by Pharaoh-Hophra, Jeremiah was about to depart the city for Benjamin, when he was cast into the "dungeon;" but he obtained leave to be removed again into the court of the prison (xxxvii. 12–21). On the second advance of the Chaldeans to the siege, Jeremiah, from the king's prison, urged the Jews to save themselves by submission to Nebuchadnezzar (xxxviii. 2, 3); and, in consequence of this, the princes instigated the king to have him cast into a miry dungeon (xxxviii. 4–6). Again he was removed to the court prison at the intercession of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian (xxxviii. 7–13), where he remained till the capture of the city (xxxviii. 28), when he was liberated (xxxix. 11; xl. 1), &c.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* OPPOSITION TO GOD'S MESSENGER. See similar topic in chap. xxvi. 9; with Homilies.

Vers. 4, 5. ZEDEKIAH'S PUNISHMENT. "*His eyes shall behold his* (Nebuchadnezzar's) *eyes.*"

Adroitly Jeremiah keeps back the calamity which is here half suggested. Ezekiel declares (prophesying at the same time, but *in Babylon* among the captives of the same event) that Zedekiah should be brought to Babylon, but *should "not see it"* (Ezek. xii. 13). The explanation is given by Jeremiah (xxxix. 6, 7).

Ver. 5. GOD'S AMELIORATING MERCY TO ZEDEKIAH. "Until I visit him, saith the Lord."

Jerome points out that these words are enigmatical, for "visitation means both *consolation* and *punishment.*"

Already the prophet had *hidden the harder fate* which should so soon befall the king; for "it is not the business of prophecy necessarily to aggravate human suffering" (Dr. Payne Smith).

And in chap. xxxiv. 4, 5, we find some warrant for the hope that the blind king, in his exile, was *not treated with severity by his captors;* whereas he was held *in honour by the Jewish exiles*, who paid tenderest homage to him at his death and burial.

Ver. 5. *Theme:* A PREDICTED DEFEAT. "*Though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.*"

i. The will of the Lord decides *all battles.* It matters not however great the army, disciplined the troops, valiant the men, heroic the officers, skilful the commander; nor though the navy be powerful, her ships ironclad, her guns of greatest calibre, &c. If God says, "Ye shall not prosper," neither power of the army nor prowess of the navy will command success and secure victory. "The great, the mighty God, the Lord of Hosts" (ver. 18), can so derange the best-arranged plans that the battle shall not be to the strong. He giveth the victory to whomsoever He please.

ii. As with nations *so with men.* Though they "rise up early and sit up late," if God says, "Ye shall not prosper," failure shall follow every effort and scheme. Nothing can set aside the decisions of His will.

I. *What are, then,* the conditions of success in life's undertakings? Philosophers would reply, that the means be adapted to the end, that there be wisdom and skill in using those means, and that provision be made for all contingencies.

This would probably ensure success were there no presiding Power, whose interposition may frustrate all human purposes.

This Power existing, it is evident that success depends, not simply on well-adapted plans, but on the will of God.

Everything then, from a military campaign to a prosperous journey, depends on God's will. "Though *ye fight* ye shall not prosper." "Making request, if I may have a prosperous journey *by the will of God.*"

II. God's will should be consulted, and His blessing sought, in all our undertakings. "In everything, by prayer and supplication," &c.

1. There is no request which man can make to God but *He can answer it.* "Nothing is too hard for the Lord" (ver. 27). Indeed nothing *is* hard, nothing *is* difficult. With Him it is as easy to crush an empire as a moth, &c. His power knows no limit.

2. While the power of God is unlimited, *His power is regulated by His will.* "Whatever He *pleaseth* that doeth He." His *will* is the dictate of His *infallible wisdom.* No caprice; no arbitrary determinations.

III. *Amid failure of human plans,* God is working all things with wisdom and for a beneficent purpose. If "in wisdom He *made*" all things, in equal wisdom He *governs* all.

1. Though *in ways mysterious to us,* yet He works wisely. Men who *love God* may "fight with the Chaldeans" and *lose the battle;* may be "diligent in business," yet unsuccessful; yet, though all things seem against them, God is making all things promote their real welfare. "All things work together for good," &c.

2. Nor forget that *out of darkness God can bring forth light;* out of chaos, order; out of evil, good. In the midst of our darkness and confusion we may "hang our harps upon the willows;" but when we see all—in eternity, we put on immortality, we shall shout, "Victory through the blood of the Lamb!"—*Arranged from "Walks with the Prophet Jeremiah," by Rev. D. Pledge.*

See Addenda: HELP FROM GOD.

Ver. 8. *Theme:* PRESCIENCE SEALED BY EXPERIENCE. "Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord."

Did Jeremiah *distrust the Divine voice* within him beforehand?

I. The prophetic inspiration did *not always co-exist* with personal conviction in the prophet himself. The two were essentially distinct.

Prophets did not always *understand* their own prophecies. "No prophecy was of *private* interpretation."

Messengers from God carried tidings which seemed often to them *incredible.* The prophecy of repossession of their land seemed incredible to Jeremiah (see vers. 24, 25).

II. *Divine assurances may be* accepted *by us without strong and* vivid realisation of their certainty. We take them as "*the word of the Lord,*" and in *some vague sense* hold them to be true, and that they will prove themselves true.

But we do not "*know*" them to be "the word of the Lord:" there *lacks in us firm apprehension* of them, as the very utterance of God who is true and faithful.

So that God's words may be accepted *without our perfect and rejoicing confidence* in their being fulfilled.

III. *Our human weakness and susceptibilities* confuse, at times, the clear recognition of a Divine message to us. Jeremiah's *wishes or reluctance* in this matter of purchasing the field tended to *confuse the sense of God's word* in him. Our feelings and desires, our reluctance or eagerness, does much to make us unduly eager to *interpret our wishes as a sense of God's word in us,* or to interpret *our disinclinations* as being God's word in us.

The apprehension of *the inutility of any course of conduct* leads us to mistrust the word of God in us. It seemed eminently useless to Jeremiah to purchase that field. He was nearly sixty years of age, and the captivity was to be for seventy years, how could *he* ever

reoccupy the field he purchased? Much that we feel God wishes us to do seems to us useless. Our *judgment*, as well as our *disinclination*, may cloud the Divine word in us.

IV. When the confirmation of God's Word comes to us in its actual fulfilment, conviction is complete. And "the word of the Lord" *does literally vindicate itself.* "Behold Hanameel shall come unto thee" (ver. 7); "*So* Hanameel came to me" (ver. 8).

Such fulfilments are the common experience of all God's servants. Not prophets alone. "Not one good thing of all which the Lord hath spoken hath failed."

Yet *faith* should not *wait for such verification.* "Because thou hast *seen* Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed." See Isa. l. 10.

Ver. 9. *And I bought the field.*" *Florus*, the Roman historian, records that during the days when Rome was being besieged by Hannibal, the very ground on which he was encamped was put up for sale at Rome, and found a purchaser; thereby indicating the strong confidence of the ultimate issue of the siege which animated the Roman people.

Ver. 16. *Theme:* PRAYER THE SOLACE OF A PERPLEXED SOUL. Jeremiah obeys God's command: purchases the land which seems so useless, parting with money which—in the emergencies of a siege—seemed so invaluable. In a misgiving mood, he carries his perplexity to God's throne, and in prayer seeks rest of mind and soul. *Conviction* in him was at strife with God's *command.*

I. *The soul in prayer* rises to majestic thoughts of God (vers. 17–19).

His *almightiness* (17); *graciousness* (18); *righteousness* (19). Such thoughts prove like *clear shinings from heaven* on our dimness and doubt.

II. *The soul in prayer* gathers up memories of God's wondrous deeds. Oh, how the recollection of His mercies and deliverances flood the soul while we kneel! (vers. 20–22).

III. *The soul in prayer* realises the appalling unworthiness of man *consequent upon his sin* (ver. 23). It is when near the throne, and looking up into the Divine face, seeing visions of God's great love and *redeeming mercy*, that we feel man's criminality, and cry for ourselves, "I am a man of unclean lips, for I have seen the King the Lord of Hosts."

IV. *The soul in prayer* ventures to lay all its misgivings upon God. "Behold the mount!" (ver. 24). The difficulties of *interpreting* God's dealings, and of *faith* in God's words. The soul grows strong and confident when near Him, feels it *may* and *must* lay all its fears, and wonderments, and troubles upon a God so tender and wise.

Jeremiah could not reconcile *God's prophecies*, through himself, that He would destroy the land, with *this command* to him to purchase soil as if it were a sure and inalienable possession.

V. *The soul in prayer* finds relief in the freest and fullest unburdening of itself before the Lord. There is no reserve. Tells God it cannot see the *consistency of His own action!* "Behold Thou seest it" (ver. 24); the *ruin* Thou declarest should come is at hand; yet "Thou hast said, *Buy thee* the field!"

And that is the occasion of human anxiety, when God does *not seem* to us *consistent with Himself.* Thus *Abraham*, when called to offer Isaac, in whom the promises centred. And even our Lord, though the beloved Son, cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou *forsaken* Me?"

Then, *in the mystery* the soul learns *resignation;* and in resignation it enters into *rest.*

See Addenda: SOLACE OF PRAYER.

"For one thing only, Lord, dear Lord, I plead—
Lead me aright,
Though strength should falter, and though heart should bleed,
Through Peace to Light.

I do not ask, O Lord, that Thou shouldst shed
Full radiance here:
Give but a ray of peace, that I may tread
Without a fear.

I do not ask my cross to understand,
My way to see;
Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand,
And follow Thee.

Joy is like restless day; but Peace Divine
Like quiet night!
Lead me, O Lord, till perfect day shall shine,
Through Peace to Light."

N.B.—With this outline should be connected the outline on ver. 27: GOD'S REPLY, &c.

Note.—*M. Henry* observes: *Prayer is the salve of every sore*, and points out that "before Jeremiah went to prayer he delivered the deeds that concerned his new purchase to Baruch, which may intimate to us that when we are going to worship God *we should get our minds as clear* as may be from the cares and encumbrances of the world."

On ver. 17, see Noticeable Topics at end of chapter: CREATION—AN ARGUMENT FOR FAITH.

Ver. 17. A BEWILDERED SOUL. See Sectional Homilies on chap. xii. 1–6, p. 246, and on ver. 1, p. 248.

Vers. 17–25. *Theme:* DIVINE PROMISES OUR BEST CONSOLATION IN EVERY AFFLICTION.

i. There are promises of Divine help for every kind of distress in human life.

ii. These promises often sound very wonderful (24, 25).

iii. Their fulfilment on the part of God is guaranteed by the perfection of the Divine nature (17–19).

iv. Their fulfilment is, on our part, conditioned by faith.—*Naegelsbach.*

Ver. 19. *Theme:* THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S WISDOM AND THE ABUNDANCE OF HIS POWER. Proved from His nature: "*Great in counsel and mighty in work*," &c.

I. *God has the power of making the* deepest affliction *of His children produce their* highest happiness.

II. *The contrivances of tyrants to* oppress the Church procure its establishment.

III. *The* triumphs *of Satan turn to* the destruction of his empire.—*Sawin, in Lange.*

Ver. 19. *Theme:* GOD'S EYES UPON THE PATHS OF MEN. "For Thine eyes are *open* upon *all the ways* of the sons of men." This serious and important fact should—

I. Shake us and awake us from our security. What if some of our "ways" are *sinful*, and such as the Lord must disapprove?

II. Humble us if we are under the discipline of God's Spirit. For though avowedly being "led by the Spirit of God," we may yet be turning to our own *self-made courses*, and may not have allowed a *fixed and sure heart* to be imparted to us.

III. Comfort and encourage us when we are led in dark and difficult paths. For we *often* are: and are led by Him whose eyes are "*open*," though our eyes are dim.—*J. M. Mueller, in Lange.*

See Homily on chap. xvii. 10: GOD'S RULE OF JUDGMENT.

Vers. 20, 21. GOD'S WONDERS IN THE PAST. See Homilies on chap. xi. 7, xxx. 18.

Ver. 22. COVENANTED BLESSINGS. See Homily on chap. xi., sec. 1–8, p. 232, and on ver. 1, p. 234.

Ver. 27. *Theme:* GOD'S REPLY TO A PERPLEXED SOUL.

I. He confirms the pleader's faith in Himself. "*I am*," &c. (ver. 27). Therefore *thy foes* (vers. 28, 29) *work My will, and nothing exceeds My power* to fulfil my promises of Israel's repossession of the land (ver. 37).

II. He explains the occasion of His just displeasure. "This city hath been to Me as a provocation of Mine anger," &c. (ver. 31). Observe that God reiterates the words, "provoke Me to anger," *five times* (vers. 29, 30, 31, 32, 37).

III. He protests against the abuse of His graciousness (ver. 33).

IV. He affirms the grand purposes of mercy He cherishes (vers. 37–41). Here, therefore, note—

i. It is in strengthening the soul's *trust in God's all-sufficiency* for all occasions that He *allays fear* (ver. 27).

ii. It is in *vindicating the righteousness of His displeasure that He silences our murmurings* (ver. 31).

iii. It is in reminding us *of grace extended to us in vain* that He teaches us how *patient and longsuffering His nature is* (ver. 33).

iv. It is in *inspiring clear hopes of a merciful issue* out of distress that *He ends our questionings* and leads us into *loving trust* (vers. 37–41).

Ver. 27. *Theme:* GOD'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF. This is God's account of Himself—

I. "I *am*:" Individuality.

II. "I am the *Lord*:" Dominion, majesty, &c.

III. "The God of all flesh:" Universality; condescension;—not only the God of mighty spirits, but the God of infirm and dying *flesh*.

IV. "Is anything too hard for Me?" *Distrust* rebuked, *prayer* encouraged, *completeness* guaranteed—completeness of council, and completeness of execution.

Application: Every word of this is *a terror to evil-doers*. Every word of it is inspiration to the true and noble.—*City Temple*.

On ver. 29. JERUSALEM'S RUINS, see chap. xxi. 10.

On ver. 30. EVIL DONE FROM YOUTH, see Homilies on chap. ii. 7; iii. 25; vii. 22–26; xxii. 21.

On ver. 33. TURNING THE BACK ON GOD, see Homilies on chap. ii. 27; vi. 24; and on GOD'S EARNESTNESS IN DEALING WITH SINNERS, "Rising up early," &c., see Homily on chap. vii. 13.

On ver. 34. "ABOMINATIONS IN MINE HOUSE," see Homily, "*Violated Sanctuaries Doomed*," chap. vii. 12–14.

On ver. 37. ISRAEL GATHERED AGAIN, see Homilies on chap. xxiii. 3–6, &c.

Vers. 37–40. *Theme:* THE FUTURE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

I. What blessings God has in reserve for His chosen people.

1. A restoration to their own land (ver. 37).

2. A renewed acknowledgment of their relation to Him (ver. 38).

3. A spirit of piety poured out upon them (ver. 39).

II. What security they have for the final possession of these blessings.

1. The veracity of God (ver. 40).

2. The power of God. "I will not turn away from them to do them good" (ver. 40).

"Learn to realise these glorious expectations, to labour for the desolate and outcast children of Israel.—*Charles Simeon*.

On ver. 38. "My PEOPLE," see on chap. xxiv. 7; xxx. 22.

On ver. 39. A HEART GIVEN BY GOD, see Homily on chap. xxiv. 7.

On ver. 40. A CHANGELESS COVENANT, see on chap. xxxi. 31, 33.

On. ver. 41. Compare xxxi. 28.

Theme: ISRAEL'S RESTORATION WHOLLY ENGAGING GOD. "Assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul."

I. God's purposes of grace move His own nature to deepest sympathy. He is *not coldly occupied* in calculating upon them, but *fervently moved by them*. His "whole heart and soul" is stirred. "God *so loved*."

II. God's oversight of His people engages His most earnest and tender solicitude. He is *no indifferent spectator* of their career. His "whole heart and soul" are in their welfare.

III. God's glorious designs animate Him with unceasing delight. He "*rejoices* over them to do them good—with His whole heart," &c. Hence

1. *The Church's joy*, in times of great and God-given blessedness, is faint as compared with God's delight.

2. *The soul's gratitude for restoration* to the favours sin forfeited is only a reflection of the joy God feels in his redemption.

3. *The bliss of the ransomed in heaven* is a prospect which fills the "whole heart and the whole soul" of God Himself with sympathetic delight.

NOTICEABLE TOPIC IN CHAPTER XXXII.

Topic: CREATION—AN ARGUMENT FOR FAITH. *Text:* "*Ah, Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee*" (ver. 17).

When Jeremiah came into his chamber alone, it is possible that he began to question himself as to what he had been doing, and troubled thoughts rolled over his mind:—"I have been purchasing a useless possession," said he. See how he refuses to indulge the thought. He gets as far as saying, "Ah, Lord God!" as if he were about to utter some unbelieving or rebellious sentence, but he stops himself, "Thou canst make this plot of ground of use to me; Thou canst rid this land of these oppressors; Thou canst make me yet sit under my vine and my fig-tree in the heritage which I have bought; for Thou didst make the heavens and the earth, and there is nothing too hard for Thee." This gave a majesty to the early saints, that they dared to do at God's command things which were unaccountable to sense, and which reason would condemn. They consulted not with flesh and blood; but whether it is a Noah who is to build a ship on dry land, an Abraham who is to offer up his only son, or a Moses who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a Joshua who is to besiege Jericho seven days, using no weapons but the blasts of rams' horns,—they all act upon God's command; they act contrary to all the dictates of carnal reason; and God, even the Lord God, gives them a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith. I would to God we had in the religion of these modern times a more potent infusion of this heroic faith in God. When Edward Irving preached that memorable sermon concerning the missionary, who he thought was bound to go forth without purse or scrip, and trusting in his God alone, to preach the Word, a howl went up to heaven against the man as a fanatic. They said he was visionary, unpractical, mad, and all because he dared to preach a sermon full of faith in God. If once again we could, like the world, be hanged upon nothing but the simple power and providence of God, I am sure we should find it a blessed and a safe way of living, glorious to God, and honourable to ourselves.

It is my business to conduct you to Jeremiah's place of confidence. Seeing that his case is hopeless, knowing that man can do nothing at all for him, the prophet resorts at once to the God that created the heaven and the earth, and he exclaims, "Nothing is too hard for Thee." Use the text *to stimulate the evangelist; to encourage the inquirer;* and *to comfort the believer.*

I. To stimulate the evangelist. And who is the evangelist? Every man and woman who has tasted that the Lord is gracious. There should be no dumb tongue in all our host; we should have no idle hand in the harvest field here, here is your *encouragement:* the work is God's, and your success is in the hand of Him who made the heaven and the earth. Let me refresh your memory with the old story of creation:—

1. Remember that *the world was created from nothing.* You have often said, "Mine is a very hard task, for I address myself to men in whom I see nothing hopeful. I batter against a granite conscience, but it is not moved; I thunder forth the law, but the dead and callous heart has not been stirred; I talk of the love of Christ, but the eye is not suffused with tears; I point to hell, but no terror follows; and to heaven, but no holy desire is kindled! there is nothing in man that encourages me in my work, and I am ready to give it over." Come back with me to the world's creation. Of what did God make the world? Was there any substance ready to His hand out of which to mould this round globe? Naught was there anywhere, and yet He spake and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. *The case of the sinner is a parallel one.* You say there is nothing in the

sinner. Ay, then, there is room here for a re-creating work; for the Eternal God to come, and with His outstretched arm to create a new heart and a right spirit, and put His grace where there was none before. If *you* had to convert the sinner, then, indeed, your task were as hopeless as to create new orbs out of nothing; but He who hath created all this marvellous earth, and had nothing to begin with, can give life, and fear, and hope, and faith, and love, where there were no heavenly ingredients upon which He might work.

2. But you have *none to help you* or go forth in your work with you. When God made the world—and the same God is with thee—*He worked alone.* "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him?" No archangel bowed his head and offered advice to the Most High, for the archangel himself is but a creature. Cherubim and seraphim might sing when the work was over, but help in the work they could not. Look ye to the heavens above or to the deeps beneath, where see ye the impress of any hand but God's, and that hand a solitary one? Roll thee, then, thy burden on thy God if thou be alone, for alone with Him thou hast the best of company. With Him thou shalt prevail though all men forsake thee.

"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends,
Who, who shall stay His hand?"

Let not this, then, trouble thee; that thou art alone. "Ah, Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee."

3. But you reply, "My sorrow lieth not so much in that I am alone, as in the melancholy fact that I am *very conscious of my own weakness*, and of my want of adaptation for my peculiar work. I am not sufficient for these things; but rather I feel like Jonah, that I would flee into Tarshish, that I might escape from the burden of the Lord against this Nineveh." Ay, but cast thy thoughts back again upon creation. *The Eternal needed no instruments in creation.* What tools did God use when He made the heavens and the earth? Had He ought beside His own hand? Are not the heavens the works of His fingers, and the sun and the moon His handiwork? See, then, if God can work without instruments in the creation of a world, He can surely work with a poor and a mean instrument in the conversion of a sinner. If the Lord take in His hand but a smooth stone out of the current, yet when He hurleth it from His sling, it shall pierce even a giant's brow. He saveth not by man's strength, nor by human learning, and eloquence, and talent. It is *His strength*, and not the strength or weakness of the instruments to which we must look. Therefore say, with Paul, "I glory in infirmities, that the power of God may rest on me;" and let this be thy song—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." "Ah, Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched-out arm; and there is nothing too hard for Thee;" Thou canst do wonders even by the meanest instrument.

4. Dost thou still complain, and say—"Alas! it is little I can say! When I speak, I can but utter *a few plain words*—true and earnest, but not mighty. I have no power to plead with souls with the tears and the seraphic zeal of a Whitfield. I can only tell the tale of mercy simply, and leave it there." Well, and *did not God create all things by His naked word?* Was there any eloquence when God spake, and it was done? "Let there be light," and there was light. At this day, is not the Gospel in itself the rod of Jehovah's strength? Is it not the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth? And doth not Paul constantly insist upon it, that it is not with wisdom of words, nor with fineness of speech, lest the excellency of the power should not be of God, but of man; and lest man's faith should stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of the Most High?

5. Another pleads, "You are not aware of *the darkness of the district in which I labour*. I toil among a benighted, unintelligent, ignorant people. I cannot expect to see fruit there, toil as I may." Ah! brother, and while you talk so you never will see any fruit, for God giveth not great things to unbelieving men. But for the encouragement of thy faith, let me remind thee that it is the God that made the heavens and the earth on whom thou hast to lean, and what is that which was written of old? "The earth was without form and void, *and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*" How dense that darkness was; that primeval darkness which had never been stirred by a single ray of light; that dense, thick, sevenfold Egyptian darkness that had never known a sun or moon, and had never been pierced by light of star! And dost thou think the darkness of thy hearers is thicker than this ancient darkness of the everlasting night?

6. Further, and still to press the same argument. "Ay," saith one, "but the men among whom I labour are *so confused in their notions*, they put darkness for light and light for darkness; their moral sense is blunted; if I try to teach them, their ears are dull of hearing and their hearts are given to slumber. Besides, they are full of vain janglings and oppose themselves to the truth; I endure much contradiction of sinners, and they will not receive the truth in the love of it." Ay, then, I bid thee go back to the old creation that thou mayest be comforted concerning the new. *Did not the Holy Spirit brood with shadowing wings over the earth when it was chaos?* Did He not bring out order from confusion? Then the earth stood out all fair and glittering, for God had done it; disorder yielded to law; darkness gave place to light; chaos turned to glorious order in His sight. The same marvels can be wrought in your case.

7. "Ah," say you, "they are all so dead, so dead!" Ay, and remember *how the waters brought forth* life abundantly; and how the earth brought forth the creeping thing, and the cattle after its kind; and how, at last, man was made out of the very dust of the earth. Oh, God can readily give life to the dead nature of evil men; thou hast but to rely on Him, the quickening influence shall descend, and thou shalt live.

8. *See how fair and glorious this earth is now!* Well might the morning stars sing together, and the sons of God shout for joy! And dost thou think that God cannot make as fair a heart in man, and make it bud and blossom, and teem with hallowed life? Thinkest thou that Christ cannot make the angels sing even a nobler song of joy over a soul that is washed in blood and a spirit robed in white that shall praise God and the Lamb for ever?

II. **To encourage the inquirer.** Many really desirous to be saved are full of doubts, and difficulties, and questionings.

Remember that the question about your salvation is not whether you can save yourself, for that is answered in a thundering negative from God's throne— *You cannot!* "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." The question is—*Can God save you?* Can God save you? That is the question. Your unbelief will suggest the difficulty that—

1. *Your mind is so dark.* "I cannot see Christ," says one; "I feel benighted; it is all darkness, thick as night with me." Yes, but then there is the question, Can God roll this night away? And the answer comes, He who said, "Let there be light," and there was light, can certainly repeat the miracle.

2. Another of your doubts will arise from the fact that *you feel so weak.* You cannot do what you would. You would leave sin, but still fall into it; would lay hold on Christ, but cannot. Then comes the question, Can God do it? And we answer, He who made the heavens and the earth without a helper, can certainly save thee when thou canst not help thyself.

No part of the world *helped its own creation.* No mountain uplifted its own head; no star appointed its own path of brightness. No flower can say, "I created my own loveliness;" no eagle that cuts the air can say, "I gave myself my

soaring wing and my piercing eye." God hath made them all; and so, sinner, troubled because of thine impotency, He wanteth no power in thee. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." Rest thou upon God in Christ, and cast thyself on Him, and He will do it all. (See Addenda: HUMAN INABILITY.)

3. "Ay," sayest thou again, "but I am in such an awful state of mind; *there is such a confusion within me;* I cannot tell what is the matter with me; I know not what I am; I cannot understand myself." Was not the world just so of old, and did not all the beauty of all lands rise out of this dire confusion? Cannot God, then, do this for thee, and give thee a peace that passeth all understanding? Trust thou in Christ, despite it all, for He can hush the hurricane to slumber and lay the storm to sleep.

4. There is more hope in thy case than there was in the creation of the world, for in the creation *there was nothing done beforehand.* The plan was drawn, no doubt, but no material was provided; no stores laid in to effect the purpose. But in thy case the work is done already, *beforehand.* On the bloody tree Christ has carried sin; in the grave He has vanquished death; in resurrection He has rent for ever the bonds of the grave; in ascension He has opened heaven to all believers; and in His intercession He is pleading still for them that trust Him. "It is finished," remember, so that it is easier to save thee than to make a world, for the world had naught prepared for it.

5. Yet again, *God has done something more in thee* than there was done before He made the world. Emptiness did not cry "O God! create me." Darkness could not pray, "O Lord! give me light." Confusion could not cry, "O God! ordain me into order." But see what He has done for you! He has *taught you to cry,* "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He has made you plead, "Lighten my darkness, O Lord, lest I sleep the sleep of death." He has taught you to say, "I have gone astray, like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant." See, friend, the grass cannot pray for dew, and yet it falls; and shall you cry for it and God withhold it? The thirsty earth hath no voice to ask for showers, and yet they descend; and will God let you cry and not answer you?—you! made in His own image, will He let you cry and not hear you, when He has Himself said, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but would rather that he should turn unto Me and live"?

6. It was *in God's power to make the world or not,* just as He pleased. No promise bound Him; no covenant made it imperative upon Him that His arm should be outstretched. Sinner, the Lord is not bound to save thee except from His own promise, and that promise is, "He that calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." He cannot withhold saving thee if thou callest upon Him.

7. It is certain that there is *more room in your case for God to glorify Himself* than there was in the making of the world. In making the world He glorified His wisdom and He magnified His power, but He could not show His mercy. He could have no mercy upon floods and mountains, upon cattle and flying fowl. There was kindness, but no mercy, for they had not sinned. Now, here in your case, there is room for every attribute of God, for His loving-kindness, His faithfulness, His truth, His power, His grace.

III. To comfort believers. You are *greatly troubled* are you? It is a common lot with us all. And you have nothing on earth to trust to now, and are going to be cast on your God alone? Happy trouble that drives thee to thy Father! Blessed storm that wrecks thee on the Rock of ages! Glorious billow that washes thee upon this heavenly shore! And now thou hast nothing but thy God to trust to, *what art thou going to do?* To fret? Oh, do not thus dishonour thy Lord! Show the world that thy God is worth ten thousand worlds to thee. Show rich men how rich thou art in thy poverty when the Lord God is thy helper. Show the strong man how strong thou art in thy weakness when underneath thee are the

everlasting arms. Now, *now* is thy time to glorify God. There was no room for courage before, but now there is space for feats of faith and valiant exploits. Be strong and very courageous, and the Lord thy God shall certainly, as surely as He built the heavens and the earth, glorify Himself in thy weakness, and magnify His might in the midst of thy distress. The Lord help us to lean wholly on Him, and never on ourselves, and let His name be had in remembrance while the earth endureth. Amen.—*Condensed from Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon*, A.D. 1862.

ADDENDA TO CHAP. XXXII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

HELP FROM GOD.

Philip Henry thus wrote upon a studying day: "I forgot when I began explicitly and expressly to crave help from God, and the chariot-wheels drove accordingly."

"Angels know the happiness of power; we, the happiness of weakness."—*Lady Powerscourt.*

Ver. 16. SOLACE OF PRAYER.

"Thy love, O Lord, restores me
From sighs and tears to praise;
And deep my soul adores Thee,
Nor thinks of time or place:
I ask no more, in good or ill,
But union with Thy holy will.

'Tis that which makes my treasure,
'Tis that which brings my gain;
Converting woe to pleasure,
And reaping joy from pain.
Oh, 'tis enough, whate'er befall,
To know that God is All in all."

—*Madame Guyon.*

"His heart began to boil with unbelief and carnal reasonings; he therefore setteth himself to pray down those distempers. As a man may sleep out his drunkenness, so he may pray away his perturbation."—*Trapp.*

HUMAN INABILITY.

"I would, but *can't repent*,
Though I endeavour oft;
This stony heart can ne'er relent,
Till Jesus makes it soft.

I would, but *cannot love*,
Though woo'd by love Divine;
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine.

I would, but *cannot rest*
In God's most holy will;
I know what He appoints is best,
Yet murmur at it still.

Oh, could I but *believe!*
Then all would easy be;
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve;
My help must come from Thee!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—This chapter is in date and subject essentially linked to chapter xxxii. For Notes, therefore, see previous chapter.

Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 3. "MIGHTY THINGS:" altering ב into כ, making the word נְצֻרוֹת, the better statement, "*hidden* things which thou *knowest not*," is gained, and this is probably the correct reading. Or retaining the word בְּצֻרוֹת unaltered, which means *fortified*, it may be understood as *impenetrable* things, *inaccessible* things, and hence "*secret things which thou knowest not.*"

Ver. 4. "HOUSES WHICH ARE THROWN DOWN BY THE MOUNTS:" or *against* the mounts; for in sieges the enemy, as he encroached upon the city, pulled down houses as materials for his inner fortifications. "AND BY THE SWORD;" rather *axes*, so rendered in Isa. xxii. 10.

Ver. 5. "THEY COME TO FIGHT." The only nominative seems "*the houses*" of ver. 4. But this is meaningless; so that for "they" we must read "the Jews." Probably the ending of ver. 4 might be joined to the beginning of ver. 5, and read thus: "And by the sword they [the *Jews* understood, or "the *kings of Judah*" mentioned in ver. 4] come to fight with the Chaldeans."

Ver. 6. "*I will bring* IT *health and cure*," i.e. *the city*; "and *will cure* THEM," *i.e.* the *people*. Lit. "I will place upon it *a bandage* (chap. viii. 22, xxx. 17) *and healing*:" a healing bandage.

Ver. 16. "*She* shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." For explanation of this *feminine* reference of Messiah's name, see Critical Note, following Homilies on the verse.

Vers. 14–26. This section is entirely omitted in the LXX., hence some of the German critics, such as Michaelis, Hitzig, and Movers (opposed, however, by Graf and Ewald), have treated this section as an addition by a later writer, the constantly imagined *second* Isaiah.

SURVEY OF CHAPTER XXXIII.

I. *While Jerusalem's ruin is actually occurring*, its "houses" being demolished by the Chaldean engines of war (ver. 4),
II. *God promises its rebuilding* (ver. 6), so as to become "a name of joy" (ver. 9); and assures to *its inhabitants future prosperity and peace* (vers. 9–14).
III. *In Messiah's advent* (ver. 15) shall Israel's future blessedness (ver. 16) be culminated; and
IV. *In the perpetuity of Christ's spiritual reign* (vers. 17–26) the sacred privileges "covenanted" to Israel shall be *ceaselessly and universally* enjoyed.

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XXXIII.

Vers. 1–9. *Theme:* A DIVINE MESSAGE SENT INTO A PRISON. There are four or five most fertile suggestions which arise from these verses—

I. A true child of God and an honoured prophet in disgrace and affliction (ver. 1).

Jeremiah's affliction came upon him because of his fidelity to God.

Let not the child of God think that his sorrows are always because of his sins. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," &c.

II. Though despised of man, the prophet was honoured of God (vers. 1, 2).

1. *To receive communications from the Divine mind is the highest honour.*

2. *He whom God honours and owns as His child need not fear what man can do.*

III. Divine consolation to an afflicted servant (ver. 3).

1. *The most precious of all privileges, that of prayer:* "Call unto Me."

2. *The most marvellous of all assurances:* "And I will answer thee."

3. *The most encouraging of all promises:* "I will . . . . show thee great and mighty things."

IV. The adversity and prosperity of nations are under the control of God (vers. 4–7).

1. *It is impossible properly to construe the history of a nation without reference to the moral government of God.*

2. *National prosperity or adversity has always been in the line of national virtue or vice.*

V. The essential conditions of national as well as individual healing (vers. 8, 9).

1. *It is essential that God come to do the work.* "I will cleanse," &c.

2. *It is essential that God work upon our moral natures.* "I will *cleanse* them from all their *iniquity*."

3. *It is essential that God work upon our moral natures by the assurance of the forgiveness of sin.* "I will pardon all," &c.

4. *This moral and spiritual cleansing and pardon are essential for the appreciation of the Divine goodness:* "And they shall fear," &c.

5. *This spiritual healing shall manifest forth the glory of God:* "It shall be to Me a name," &c.—*Rev. D. C. Hughes.*

Ver. 3. *Theme:* PRAYER BY GOD'S AFFLICTED SERVANT ENCOURAGED BY GRACIOUS ASSURANCES. "Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

The most eminent men have been found in the school of affliction: David, Jeremiah, &c.

I. The privilege encouraged, "Call unto Me."

II. The season specified, "While in the court of the prison."

III. The assurance given, "I will answer thee."

I. The privilege encouraged, "Call unto Me." The importance of this appears—

1. *From the gracious condescension that enjoins it.* God says, "Call unto Me," not for His own sake, but for ours. Not so much the injunction of duty, as the revelation of privilege.

God would have the intercourse between earth and heaven continually kept up and renewed, because of the benefit that accrues to the Church from this exercise. If we had no sins to be pardoned, no wants to be supplied, enemies to be subdued; if we were as sinless as the first Adam and as all-sufficient as the Second, it would still be our highest duty and privilege to "call upon God," and to keep up an unbroken intercourse between earth and heaven.

2. *From the examples that encourage it.* The conduct of our Lord, who, though He received not the Spirit by measure, but held the worlds of nature and of grace at His own command, yet continued all night in prayer to God. He knew *prayer prospers all*, and He would undertake nothing without prayer. When about to enter upon His public ministry by baptism, we are told, As Jesus "was *praying the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost descended on Him, with* this voice, *Thou art My beloved Son.*" When He would commission and send forth His disciples to preach His Gospel, He first sets His disciples praying, "*Pray ye the Lord of the harvest;*" and He Himself went out into a mountain to pray (Matt. ix. 38; Luke vi. 12). And when He was to engage in His last encounter with the prince of this world, "*He prayed the more earnestly, with strong cryings and tears, to Him that was able to save Him from death*, and was heard in that He feared," so that He won the field, though, like Sampson, he lost His life—the spoils of which glorious victory the Church shall divide and enjoy to all eternity.

3. *From the endless misery that must ensue without it.* If Paul says, "Pray without ceasing," what must be the danger of those who never pray? A prayerless heart may be considered as a defenceless citadel lying open and exposed to every foe. Whereas the heart of one truly devout is like a castle in which the Lord dwells, and which is garrisoned with the Divine presence.

II. The suitableness of prayer in times of trial; for it was "while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison."

He who bore the burden of our sins is ready to bear the burden of our sorrows. Care is a burden; but that may be cast on God.

Though shut out from communion with men, he was not shut out from communion with God.

Prayer is the privilege of all times. We need it in prosperity to prevent our table from becoming our trap and our snare; but it is our special relief in adversity. James says, "*Is any afflicted? let him pray.*" Men have great need for prayer, then, when trial abounds, when temptations multiply, and when the energies of the mind are unequal to the vicissitudes of life. We should pray *for support under them, for improvement by them*, and for *deliverance from them.*

1. *For support under them.*

Paul, when he was buffeted by Satan, besought the Lord thrice, and obtained the relief he most needed, "*My grace shall be sufficient for thee.*"

Moses promised the Israelites, "*The eternal God is thy Refuge*," &c.

2. *For improvement by them*, that they may now, or afterwards, "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby."

Affliction is often an instrument of improvement, but it requires grace to make it so; and prayer is the appointed means of drawing down the blessing.

Some are hardened by affliction and separated farther from God; some are softened by affliction and thus made more like Him. These, "*by the sadness of the countenance*, find the *heart made better.*" This, however, does not arise from the necessary and independent nature of adversity, but from the kindly and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit of God. Pharaoh hardened himself more and more under the plagues of Egypt till He was finally given over to a reprobate mind. Job was made more humble and holy by his calamities because God was with him through them.

Pray for gracious influences under humbling trials.

3. *For deliverance from them.*

Jeremiah did not die in the prison, but was brought out of it. He always remembered the Divine communion he enjoyed there.

III. The promise annexed—

1. *Of a gracious audience.* "I will answer thee."

God always hears, though He does not instantly answer. He heard and answered Jeremiah, though He did not immediately release him from the dungeon.

We often think that our prayers are not heard because they are not answered in the time and the way that we should

prefer and expect. Yet the prayer is really answered if there be a *gradual preparation of events* for our benefit, and a *gradual preparation of our hearts* and minds to bear and do God's holy will. If we pray *against unbelief*, the prayer is answered if our faith is silently strengthened. If we pray for *patience*, the prayer is answered if we are kept from sinking into despair under the trouble. If we pray for *holiness*, the prayer is answered when we are enabled to "resist even to blood, striving against sin." If we pray for *deliverance from trouble*, the prayer is answered by God's raising up friends who may support and comfort us, and finally be the means of our security and our rescue.

2. *Of special Divine illumination.* "I will show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." *Hidden things.*

The school of the cross is the school of light. God shows His people great and mighty things concerning *Himself*, "*the secret of the Lord;*" concerning *the interests of the Church;* concerning *the kingdom of Christ* (vers. 14–16).—*S. Thodey*, 1849.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* PRAYER ENCOURAGED. Such words must have been as a gleam of light shining through the bars of the prophet's dungeon.

I. **The invitation to prayer.** "Call upon Me."

1. *Whence* came the invitation? "The *word of the Lord* came" (ver. 1). His voice it is we hear inviting us, "*The Lord*" (ver. 2). How should every ear be attentive when Jehovah speaks and bids His creatures "call," &c.!

2. *To whom* does He address these words? A lonely prophet, in his solitary dungeon. And it is to all who are "prisoners of hope" this invitation is given.

3. *Observe the single Object of our worship.* "Call upon *Me.*" Vain is all other refuge, insufficient all other sources of consolation.

4. But *when* may we call on God? There is no limit as to *time*, or *circumstance*, or *state of mind* we are in.

5. The *manner* in which we should pray. "Call upon" denotes earnestness, fervency, perseverance. If our petitions breathe the spirit of earnest supplication, if they are the language of want, sorrow, sin, or of devout adoration and thanksgiving, they are equally acceptable.

6. He who asks us to pray *has promised His grace to teach us* how to pray (Rom. viii. 26).

II. Exceeding precious encouragements *annexed to the invitation.*

1. *The promise is as general and unlimited* as the invitation. "I will answer thee." Nothing said as to the *mode*, *time*, or *place.*

(*a.*) Sometimes "*before they call,*" &c. (Isa. xlv. 24), as in Acts xii. 5.

(*b.*) Sometimes He "makes *as though He heard not,*" though they knock. *Temporary denial* adds zeal to the suppliant, and sweetens the blessing when it is vouchsafed.

(*c.*) Sometimes in a manner *wholly different from our expectations.* Thus Paul "besought the Lord thrice" for the thorn to be *removed*, but God answered by making "grace sufficient." We ask *deliverance* from trials, &c., but God opens only "a way of escape that we may be able to *bear it.*" We pray for *spirituality*, to be weaned from the world, and "He takes away the desire of our eyes with a stroke."

2. But *the assurances here go beyond simple answer to prayer.* "I will show thee *great and mighty things*," &c. Some of these are enumerated in the following verses, and clearly point to *spiritual* blessings and to *Christ Himself.*

1. *Healing* from the wounds of the enemy (ver. 6). He is the great Physician.

2. *Liberty* from the bondage of sin (ver. 7).

3. *Entire purification and justification* (ver. 8).

4. *The wonders of redeeming grace and love* (ver. 14), &c.

Notably is promised here STILL FURTHER AND FULLER REVELATION, AND DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE THINGS. "I will *show thee*," &c.

(*a.*) So that, whatever has been already enjoyed, *there are more glorious and delightful things to be attained*

(John i. 50). New wonders shall meet the eye of faith; more "abundant peace" (ver. 6) shall fill the heart, &c.

(*b.*) If it is not so—and alas! many believers *decline*, in their experience and privilege, instead of advancing, crying, "Oh that it were with me as in times past!"—it is *because they do not maintain earnest prayer*. "*Call* upon Me, and *I will show*," &c.

(*c.*) How many great and gracious things *the Lord is waiting to reveal* to *us!* Blessed they who "go from strength to strength," who "follow on to know the Lord."

Let us all examine ourselves—

i. *Not* to "call upon God" is to forfeit the name of Christian. The Apostle uses the descriptive phrase of *believers*, as "those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord." To live without prayer is to live without Christ and without hope.

ii. Let those who profess to cultivate the duty of prayer *consider well the character of their devotions*. The prayers of many are lamentably cold, formal, and unbelieving. Hence these blessings here assured are so rarely enjoyed.—*Anonymous MS., dated* A.D. 1836.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* THE GOLDEN KEY OF PRAYER. God's people have always in their worst conditions found out the best of their God.

Rutherford has a quaint saying, that "when he was cast into the cellars of affliction, he always remembered that the great King kept His wine there, and he at once searched for the wine-bottles and drank 'wines on the lees well refined.'"

Those who dive into the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls.

I. Prayer commanded.

1. This is great condescension. So great is the *infatuation of man* on the one hand, which makes him *need a command* to be merciful to his own soul, and *so marvellous the condescension* of God on the other that He issues a command of love.

2. Our *hearts so despond* over our unfitness and guilt, that but for the command we might fear to approach.

3. It is remarkable *how much more frequently God calls us* to Him in Scripture than we find there our sinfulness denounced!

4. Nor by the commands of the Bible alone are we summoned to prayer, but by the *motions of His Holy Spirit*.

II. An answer promised.

1. *God's very nature*, as revealed in Jesus Christ, assures us that He will accept us in prayer.

2. *Our own experience* leads us to believe that God will answer prayer; *e.g.*, the conversion of many a child has been an answer to parents' pleadings with God.

3. Yet God does not always give *the thing we ask*.

Lord Bolingbroke said to the Countess of Huntingdon, "I cannot understand, your ladyship, how you can make out earnest prayer to be consistent with submission to the Divine will."

"My lord," she said, "that is a matter of no difficulty. If I were a courtier of some generous king, and he gave me permission to ask any favour I pleased of him, I should be sure to put it thus: 'Will your majesty be graciously pleased to grant me such and such a favour; but at the same time, though I much desire it, if it would in any way detract from your majesty's honour, or if in your majesty's judgment it should seem better that I did not have this favour, I shall be quite as content to go without it as to receive it.' So you see I might earnestly offer a petition, and yet might submissively leave it with the king."

III. Encouragement to faith. "I will show," &c.

1. Promised to God's prophet, this specially applies to *every teacher*. The *best* way for a teacher or learner in Divine truth *to reach the "deeper things of God" is to be much in prayer*. How did Daniel *find out Nebuchadnezzar's dream?* Set himself to prayer. When John saw the *book was sealed*, "he wept much," and those tears were his liquid prayers; then "the Lion of the tribe of Judah opened the book."

Luther says, "*Bene orare est bene studuisse*"—To have prayed well is to have studied well.

2. *The saint may expect to discover*

deeper experience and to know more of the higher spiritual life, by *being much in prayer; e.g.*, Jacob wrestling for the blessing and name.

3. It is certainly true of the *sufferer under trial;* if he waits on God he shall have greater deliverance than he ever dreamed of (Lament. iii. 57).

4. Here is encouragement *for the worker.* We know not how much capacity for usefulness there is in us. More prayer will show us more power.

5. This should cheer us *in intercession for others.* "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

6. Some are seekers *for your own conversion.* Pray, and see if God will not "show you great and mighty things."—*C. H. Spurgeon*, A.D. 1865.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* TRUTHS GREAT AND MIGHTY. We know but in part. Without Divine teaching we should have known nothing essentially "great." Suppose God had taught us nothing by revelation or inspiration, we should have known nothing which relates to our highest interests.

I. By His Word God has *already shown* us great and mighty things which *we knew not and could not have known:* incarnation, redemption, regeneration, resurrection, and man's final destiny.

II. Yet though these great and mighty things *are known*, they have not been "shown" to men in their *reality and supreme importance.*

But when God, who brought light out of darkness, *shines* into the dark mind, that mind *sees* "the great and mighty" truths. The *Spirit's* teaching differs from the teaching of *revelation* in this —giving to the mind a *due appreciation* of the truths revealed.

III. Scientific truths are what they are whether man understands them or not; but, *till instructed*, men understand not their value. So the truths of revelation are what they are; but, till men are enlightened by the Divine Spirit, they are not understood in their essential greatness and importance.

The Spirit "takes the things of Christ and reveals them" unto us—such things as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," &c.

IV. In value, importance, and results they infinitely transcend all other things.

What have the "great and mighty" truths of science and philosophy *done for the world or for man*, compared with the greater and mightier truths of the Gospel? Have they answered the question, "What must I do to be saved?" healed a broken heart; led men to contentment with their lot; taught them how to live or die?

V. Yet, there are greater and mightier truths to be known, even by us who have sat at Jesus' feet and learned of Him. There are yet "deep things of God" which are to us unknown. If there are mysteries which "angels desire to look into;" so there are things our feeble minds cannot comprehend and our partially sanctified hearts cannot understand.

VI. The *deeper our consciousness of this fact*, the greater will be our desire for more light. To obtain which there must be fervent, earnest *prayer.* "Call upon Me," &c.

And also a *holy walking with God.* "He gives to the man that is good in His sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy."

Thus, to the prayerful and holy, God makes revelations of "great and mighty things," of which men of greater talent and higher culture are left in ignorance. "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, *and hast revealed them unto babes.*"

VII. *That is a poor philosophy which* leaves men unacquainted with those "great and mighty things" essential to their eternal welfare; which leaves them to grope on in darkness through life's pathway, and then to die and perish in their sins.

That is the *true* philosophy which "brings life and immortality to light," and then leads the soul on to the full realisation of bliss when the shadows of time have passed away.

Does any man *lack this wisdom?* "Let him ask of God," &c.

Many mistake *mere knowledge* for this "*wisdom which is from above.*" Learning may prevail, knowledge may abound, wit may be common, but

"*Wisdom is rare, Lorenzo.*"

But it belongs to them who are "taught of God," and "learn of Jesus."—*Rev. D. Pledge*, "*Walks with Jeremiah.*"

Ver. 6. *Theme:* THE GOSPEL A SURE REMEDY. A promise to the unhappy nation of the Jews of blessings yet in store for them. Let us apply the passage for our own edification—as containing a beautiful representation of the Lord's dealings with the souls whom He redeems. Three stages of His gracious operations as the Great Physician—

I. He visits His poor patients with an all-sufficient remedy in His hand.

II. Applies that remedy. Not only "brought near," but applied.

III. Confers great blessings in consequence on the healed ones. "Abundance of peace and truth."

(1.) *Privileges of the redeemed sinner:* "peace" with God; "truth" of His grace, His covenant, His promises.

(2.) *Character acquired by the redeemed sinner* in consequence of his faith: a peaceful spirit; walking in the truth. "An Israelite in whom is no guile."

Have you sought healing?—*Rev. Arthur Roberts, M.A.*, "*Village Sermons*," vol. ii.

Vers. 6–9. *Theme:* ISRAEL INGATHERED—A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE TO GOD AND MAN. "I will cause the captivity of Israel and Judah to return," &c.

This passage has *never yet been fulfilled;* not only because the *ten tribes of Israel have not been combined* with Judah, but because *the effects* here announced *of that event* were never produced by their return from Babylon; for the *nations of the earth* have never been made to "fear and tremble" by reason of the goodness and prosperity of the Jewish nation.

I. The event predicted. God promises them here—

1. *A discovery of His will.* In their whole civil and ecclesiastical condition they are "sick," &c. (Isa. i. 5, 6). But God will "*restore health*," &c. They are in "blindness" and "ignorance," but God will "*reveal* unto them abundance of peace and *truth*."

2. *A manifestation of His favour.* "Will build them as at the first" (ver. 7, also in ver. 11). All shall be renewed to them with tenfold advantage (chap. xxx. 18, 20).

3. *A communication of His grace. Sins cleansed* (ver. 8); iniquities cast to *oblivion* (Micah vii. 19; Jer. l. 20); renewed natures (Ezek. xxxvi. 24–27).

II. The vast importance of this event. If we contemplate only the *happiness* of that people, the temporal, spiritual, and eternal happiness of those living and those yet to live, how important the event here predicted! But, limiting attention to the text, mark—

1. *The interest God Himself has in it.* "It shall be *to Me* a name *of joy*," &c. (ver. 9). Comp. also Isa. lxv. 18, 19; Zeph. iii. 17; and Isa. lxii. 4, 5.

It will also greatly *honour* God. He is glorified in His works of creation; but how much more when "all the nations of the earth shall hear" (ver. 9) of God's recovery of His people—it shall be "*a praise and an honour.*" Comp. Isa. lx. 20, 21; lxi. 1–3; lxii. 3.

2. *The interest of the whole world involved in it.* At this wonderful sight will "all the nations of the earth *fear and tremble.*" At their rescue from Egypt, a somewhat similar effect was produced (Exod. xv. 15, 16); and *the like terror* shall be created then (Micah vii. 15–17).

But others will regard the event with a *grateful awe*, "will fear and tremble for *all the goodness and prosperity* that God hath procured unto His people."

Indeed this shall incite beholders to *conviction* and *faith* (Zech. viii. 23). To this Paul alludes: "If the fall," &c., "what shall the receiving of them be *but life from the dead?*" (Rom. xi. 12, 15.)—*Chas. Simeon, M.A.*, A.D. 1828.

On vers. 10, 11. DESOLATION OF JOY; JOY RESTORED; see Homilies, &c.

on chap. vii. 34; xvi. 9; xxv. 10, 11; and also xvii. 26.

"*Praise the Lord of Hosts; for the Lord is good; for His mercy endureth for ever.*"

It was the *customary form* of liturgical thanksgiving (Ps. cvi. 1; 2 Chron. v. 13; vii. 3, 6).

They were *actually used* by the Jews at their restoration (Ezra iii. 11).

On vers. 12, 13. *Imagery of Shepherds and their Flocks*, see on chap. xxxi. 24.

On the words in ver. 13, "*The flocks pass again* UNDER THE HANDS OF HIM THAT TELLETH THEM," see Milton's line in *L'Allegro*—

> "While the ploughman, near at hand,
> Whistles o'er the furrowed land;
> And the milkmaid singeth blithe;
> And the mower whets his scythe;
> And *every shepherd tells his tale*
> Under the hawthorn in the dale—"

i.e., counts the number of the sheep he has in charge, so the *Good Shepherd* "calleth all His sheep *by name*" (John x. 3). And in 3 John 14, the Apostle says, "Greet the friends by name."

On ver. 14. "*The good thing I have promised;*" see chap. xxiii. 5; xxix. 10.

Ver. 15. *Theme:* THE BRANCH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. This verse is the exact repetition of chap. xxiii. 5. See Homilies on that verse, pp. 442, 443, 444: "*The Kingdom of the Messiah;*" "*The Nature and Prosperity of Messiah's Reign.*"

Ver. 16. *Theme:* A BRIGHT ERA FOR MANKIND. "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely."

Same words in chap. xxiii. 6. See Homily there.

Theme: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. See Homily on chap. xxiii. 6; also, "*Christ's Supreme Name;*" "*The Christian Creed Summarised;*" and "*Jehovah Justitia Nostra,*" pp. 444–448.

See specially sermon on *Sections* 1–8 of chap. xxiii.

JUDAH'S RESTORATION UNDER JEHOVAH TSIDKENU, pp. 438, 439, by Robert Gordon, D.D., and *Noticeable Topic:* JESUS OUR LORD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, by *Bishop Reginald Heber*, pp. 458, 459.

Vers. 14–16. *Theme:* JESUS CHRIST AS KING.

I. From what a noble royal stock did He proceed! *Raised* by God; *descended* from David; both by His *Deity* and His *humanity* heir to the throne.

II. How well has he exercised His rule! "With *judgment* and righteousness." He Himself is "*The Lord our Righteousness.*"

III. How widely does His dominion extend! From Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

IV. How safely does His people dwell! Kept by Him in security and peace.—*Naumann*, in *Lange*.

Ver. 16. *Theme:* THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. *Deep-wounding*—from views of Christ pierced by our sins, precedes *deep peace*—from views of His righteousness. Originally spoken to Judah and Israel.

I. *It is the sight of a* Divine righteousness. *Jehovah* has made the atonement.

II. *It is a* living righteousness. *Jehovah* is the righteousness. A *living* One gives it. He is exalted *to give it.* He comes to you with the *offer* of it.

III. *It is an* appropriated righteousness. "*Our.*" It would *not give me peace* to see the whole world clothed in Christ, if *I were not!* No *delight* to me except I am sitting under His shade myself—under the rock.

The joy of Paul was, "Christ is made unto *us* wisdom, righteousness," &c.; of Thomas, "*My* Lord and *my* God!"

APPLICATION—

1. The *rest* of a believer consists in *knowing* that Jehovah is his righteousness.

2. The folly of those who rest in *seeking* is evident—"ever learning, yet never coming," &c.

3. We see the *misery* of unbelievers. There is a glorious Divine righteousness that would *make the blackest* fair.

It will be your eternal torment, that so glorious a righteousness *was offered you*, and you died without it.—*R. Murray M'Cheyne*, 1844.

CRITICAL NOTE (ver. 16). "SHE shall be called *The Lord our Righteousness*." In xxiii. 6, the name, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," is given to Christ; it is "the name whereby *He* shall be called." In this verse the name is given to *her*, לָהּ, *i.e.*, to *Jerusalem*.

Henderson alters לָהּ to לוֹ, a not uncommon *masculine* form in the Hebrew; and reads the verse "whereby *He* shall be called" (as in chap. xxiii. 6). And the Syriac and Targum point לָהּ as masculine; the Vulgate also has "*eum*."

But *Wordsworth*, retaining the feminine, comments thus: "This is to be explained by the union of the Church with Christ (see Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. x. 17, xii. 12; Ephes. i. 22, iv. 12, 15, 16, 25, vi. 23, 30; Col. i. 18, 24); so that what belongs to Him is communicated to her. (So *Calvin* and others.) Thus, by virtue of her mystical union with Christ, and by the importation of His merits and the infusion of His Spirit, the name of the Church may be said to be 'The Lord our Righteousness;' she hides herself in Him, and is seen by God as in Him; she is clothed with Christ the Sun of Righteousness (see Rev. xii. 1), and is accepted in the Beloved (Ephes. i. 6)."

Dr. Payne Smith says: The name "is here given to Jerusalem, *i.e.*, to the Church, because it is her business *mediately* to work on earth that righteousness which Christ works *absolutely*. The Church justifies men *only because its ordinances bring men to Christ*." Comp. Ephes. i. 23.

Jamieson remarks: "Jerusalem is called by the same name as *Messiah*, by virtue of the mystical oneness between her (as the literal representative of the spiritual Church), and her Lord and Husband. Thus, whatever belongs to the Head belongs also to the members (Ephes. v. 30, 32). Hence the Church is called 'Christ' (Rom. xvi. 7; 1 Cor. xii. 12). The Church hereby professes to draw all her righteousness from Christ (Isa. xlv. 24, 25). It is for the sake of Jerusalem, *literal* and *spiritual*, that God the Father gave this name (*Jehovah Tsidkenu*) to Christ."

Vers. 17, 18. *Theme:* PERPETUITY OF DAVID'S REIGN AND OF THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD. The literal sense of these words is, that there shall be an absolute perpetuity of the Davidic and Levitical succession. These words accord with 2 Sam. vii. 16; 1 Kings ii. 4; Ps. lxxxix. 4, 29, 36; Num. xxv. 12. But—

I. **Historic events refuted the literal interpretation.**

1. As to *David*. No lineal descendant of David occupied the Jewish throne after Zedekiah, "the Asmonæan princes being of the tribe of Levi, while Herod was not a Jew at all but an Idumæan."—*Henderson*.

2. As to the *Levitical priesthood*. Although after the captivity the Levitical priesthood attained great power for a time, indeed until the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, yet since then it has absolutely ceased.

II. **Prophecy itself foretold their literal cessation.** Indeed Jeremiah himself thus announced their failure—

1. As to the *Davidic kingdom* (Jer. xxii. 30, xxx. 21).

2. As to the *Levitical priesthood* (Jer. iii. 16, xxxi. 33).

III. Their literal fulfilment *cannot be associated with* the future restoration of the Jews to Palestine. The Davidic reign and Levitical priesthood *cannot then be restored*. For—

1. Their genealogical tables have been irrecoverably lost.

2. Nothing short of a miracle would be required to distinguish then between who are descendants of David and who those of Levi.—*Henderson*.

IV. New Testament teaching declares

the absolute supercession and substitution of the spiritual *for the literal royalty and priesthood.* Its teachings are that—

1. *No king of the family of David shall reign but the Messiah;* and the seat of His government is not an earthly, but a heavenly throne (Luke i. 32, 33).

2. The Levitical services have been *for ever abrogated by the unchanging and unceasing priesthood of Christ* (Heb. vii. 12–28).

V. What explanations remove the seeming error of these predictions?

1. The Davidic kingship and Levitical priesthood *are symbols,* which *represented to the Jew* all that was most dear to his heart in the state of things under which he lived—*his national existence* and freedom from foreign oppression (which was bound up in the thought of David's perpetual kingdom), and *his religious privileges and hopes* (associated inseparably with the perpetuity of the Levitical ministries). Their restoration was therefore synonymous with the *restoration of his national and spiritual* life. But neither was so restored as to exist permanently. But that was given instead of which *both were types:* the CHURCH, whose Head is the true Prophet, Priest, and King.—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

2. The *spiritual interpretation:* its application to the MESSIAH in His *regal* and *sacerdotal* offices. The throne of David is the *spiritual throne,* which, as his descendant, Messiah is to fill for ever (Isa. ix. 6; Luke i. 32, 33). And as David's reign is thus carried forward spiritually, so the Levites may be said never to "want a man" to present sacrifices, inasmuch as "the man Christ Jesus" "ever liveth" to present the merits of His own sacrifice.—*Henderson.*

3. These pledges of perpetuity find their fulfilment in the *royalty and priesthood of all Christian souls;* called a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. ii. 5–9); "*kings and priests* unto God" (Rev. i. 6; v. 10); "priests of God and of Christ, who shall reign" (Rev. xx. 6).—*Hengstenburg.*

4. Interpreting the promised perpetuity of the *Levitical priesthood, Bishop Wordsworth,* following *Lowth,* urges that the *ministry of the Christian Church* is the complete realisation of all that was done in the offices of the high priests, the priests, and the Levites in the Tabernacle and the Temple. So that the promise here that the Levites will never want a man to stand before God to execute priestly functions, is a declaration that "there shall *never fail a succession of men set apart to God's service to perform the public offices of religion.*" Accordingly, Paul proves the rights and privileges belonging to the ministers of the Gospel from the prerogatives given to the Jewish priesthood (1 Cor. ix. 13, 14). And *Trapp* interprets it as meaning "*the continuance of an evangelical ministry in the Church to the world's end*" (Matt. xxviii. 20; Eph. iv. 11–13).

5. In proof that these predictions were to have *no mere Jewish fulfilment,* but point to a dispensation in which *national distinctions disappear amid spiritual qualifications* and experiences, we have the definite promise that *Gentiles* are to become priests and Levites. For in the call of the Gentiles there shall be *some among them ordained to be ministers in Christ's Church:* "I will also take *of them* for *priests* and for *Levites*" (Isa. lxvi. 21; see also lvi. 7, lxi. 6; Mal. i. 11, iii. 3).

Vers. 20–22. *Theme:* GREAT PROMISES GRANDLY GUARANTEED. "The *unchangeableness of God's laws in nature* is the pledge that His *promises in grace are equally immutable.*"—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"The richest promises are confirmed by the strongest assurances."—*Cowles.*

"God has hitherto kept promise with nights and days that one shall succeed the other; and will He not keep touch with His people?"—*Trapp.*

Vers. 24–26. *Theme:* SPEAKING CONTEMPTUOUSLY OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

These "*two families*" are either *Israel and Judah;* or else "the seed of *Jacob*" (ver. 26) to whom the birthright was given, and *the seed of* "*David*" (ver. 26) to whom the promise was subsequently confirmed, that of him the Messiah should spring.

Who were they who spake thus of God's people? Either the Chaldeans without the walls, or the unbelieving Jews within.

I. *The utterance of* defiance and scorn if from the *Chaldeans.* They spoke contemptuously of the Hebrews as being abandoned by their God. Implying on the part of Israel's foes—

1. *Exultation* over the rejection of God's people from His care and favour. "Aha, so would we have it!"

2. *Execration*, expressing their purpose to destroy them. "If it had not been that the Lord was on our side, when men rose up against us, then had they swallowed us up quick."

3. *Contempt.* They despised them as a forlorn, friendless, feeble folk. So Sennacherib: "*What do these feeble Jews?*"

II. *The utterance of* desolate despair by the Jews themselves. They spoke depreciatingly of themselves and their prospects. Implying on Israel's part that they were—

1. *Paralysed* by nearing disaster. The Chaldeans were encroaching on the city; capture was inevitable.

2. *Abandonment of all hope in God.* He had, as they supposed, now rejected *Judah*, as already He had Israel.

3. *Depreciation of themselves* in their relation to God as His covenant people, judging that their national existence was now well-nigh closed.

Notes—

DIEDRICH comments: "In the first instance they *would not be warned*; now they will *not be comforted.* The true prophet, however, announces death to sinners according to the law, but afterwards grace for renovation and for life.

Despair is blasphemy. God's kingdom stands and will be perfected, but the faint-hearted will not enter it.

God answers, So long as heaven and earth are preserved by Me, it is for the sake of *My* kingdom, and as a pledge that it will not fail. Israel, or, what is the same thing, David's seed, shall be a royal seed, and the captivity which the people must now endure is transient. It is impossible, however, for the worldly to understand this, who perish in carnal repose as though no God could punish them; and, again, *in affliction are so despondent* as though there were no God to help them any more."

HENRY remarks: "Deep security commonly ends in deep despair; whereas those that keep up a holy fear at all times have a good hope to support them in the worst of times."

"This is (ver. 26) a complex promise," says Trapp, "and better than money which answereth all things."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES:—1. Chronology of the Chapter. Section I., vers. 1–7, is in subject connected with chap. xxxii. 1–5. These verses, however, seem slightly to antedate that chapter, for observe the words (ver. 2), "*Go* and speak to Zedekiah," implying that Jeremiah had *not yet been imprisoned*; whereas in xxxii. 2, Jeremiah is "shut up in the court of the prison." This section must date at the *very beginning* of the Chaldean invasion, and follows closely upon the records in chap. xxi. (see notes *in loc*). Further observe, in ver. 7, that *Lachish* and *Azekah*—strong cities of defence—were as yet not captured by the Chaldeans; and these (urges Dr. Payne Smith), lying in the plain towards Egypt, must be taken before the Chaldees could march upon Jerusalem, as otherwise an Egyptian army might collect under their cover and fall upon the Chaldeans. Zedekiah was, therefore, at this time in a position for making good terms with Nebuchadnezzar. Thus the date is *early in the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign*—the date when the Chaldean army approached Jerusalem. Section II., vers. 8–end, shows that the bondservants were released as the siege drew imminent; but when—*in the summer of the same year*—the Chaldeans were drawn aside temporally from the siege by the arrival of the Egyptian army to the rescue of the Jews (ver. 21), their masters at once forced the liberated slaves back again into their service.

2. National Affairs.—See above on *Chronology of chapter.* Jeremiah had informed Zedekiah, through his messenger, of the approaching Chaldean siege (see on chap. xxi.); the siege is now begun, and Jeremiah goes to him in person and appeals to him to submit (vers. 2, 3). Before, however, the Chaldeans had taken the fortified cities of the plain (for they were

still warring against them, ver. 7), and hence at the very commencement of the siege of Jerusalem, the king "made a covenant with all the people" to liberate their servants, hoping to inspire these servants with patriotic attachment to defend the city against the Chaldean army. But, immediately the Egyptian army appeared, these servants were forced back again into bondage.

3. Contemporary History.—See on chap. xxi. and xxxii.; also compare chap. xxxvii. 5–10.

4. Geographical References.—Ver. 7. "*Lachish and Azekah.*" See 2 Chron. xi. 5–9. Both in the lowlands of Judah, to the south-west of Jerusalem. "*Lachish*" was a strong defensive town (Josh. x. 31–33), afterwards fortified and garrisoned by Rehoboam; it lay between Phœnecia and Egypt; reoccupied by the Jews after their captivity (Neh. xl. 30); its exact site not known. "*Azekah*" (see 1 Sam. xvii. 1; and Josh. x. 10, 11). Also situate in the plain towards Egypt from Jerusalem, but its present site is not known.

5. Manners and Customs.—Vers. 8, 9. "*Proclaim liberty unto man-servant and maid-servant.*" According to Jewish laws a Hebrew bondservant, having served for six years, had to be set free on the seventh (Exod. xxi. 2; Deut. xv. 12). The last year of Zedekiah's reign was the Sabbatical year (*Vide supra*, National Affairs). Ver. 5. "*Burn odours for thee:*" spices burned upon piles of faggots customary at royal funerals (2 Chron. xvi. 14; xxi. 19).

Ver. 18. "*Cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts.*" It was customary, on entering into a covenant, for the contracting parties to slay and divide an animal, and pass between the parts, indicating their deserving and readiness to be so treated if they violated the contract (Gen. xv. 10–17).

6. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 1. "*Kingdoms of the earth of His dominion.*" No art. before אַרְצֹת, and lit. "all the kingdoms *of land the dominion of his hand*," *i.e.* land subject to his hand.

Ver. 5. "*With the burnings of thy fathers.*" Many MSS. have וּבִמְשְׂרְפוֹת, *according to* the burnings, not בְּ, *with.*

Ver. 17. "*Will make you to be removed,*" &c.; "*for a removing*" (Margin), "*for a horror*" (Naegelsbach), "*give you up to agitation*" (Henderson). *Vide* note on chap. xxix. 18.

TOPICAL SURVEY OF CHAPTER XXXIV.

Section 1–7. *Zedekiah's opportunity and its alternative issue.*
" 8–22. *The people's perfidy and punishment.*

Topics: Vers. 8–11. *Hypocritical repentance distinguished from true conversion.*
Vers. 15, 16. *Violation of the law of liberty.*

Vers. 1–7. Opportunity and its Issues.

The statements in these verses, that Zedekiah should "die in peace" and be honoured with royal obsequies, seem at variance with history. Explanation—

I. Inevitable events. Verses 2 and 3 are declared as *irrevocable facts.* Zedekiah was Nebuchadnezzar's vassal, sworn to obedience and allegiance to the king of Babylon. Instead of fidelity to Babylon he had courted Egyptian succour, and conspired with petty neighbouring kings (xxvii. 2, 3) against Nebuchadnezzar. Incensed at this conspiracy, the king of Babylon was now besieging Jerusalem. Zedekiah must now face his royal master. From this there was no escape. And verse 3 specifies the inevitable incidents: 1. *Capture;* 2. *Brought face to face with the conqueror;* 3. *Carried into Babylon.*

II. Mitigating assurances. Verses 4 and 5 offer an alleviating picture: 1. *Life spared of a violent end;* 2. *Royal honours at death;* 3. *Reverent lamentations of his nation in exile.*

III. Opportunity and its alternative issues. For so must we regard these verses. The "*mitigating assurances*" are not pledged absolutely but *conditionally.*

1. *The final opportunity offered.* "Go speak to Zedekiah" (vers. 2, 3). This message left him in no doubt as to the result of the Chaldean siege, although the Egyptians came to the succour of Jerusalem. This absolute message of what should befal the city and the king ought to have shown Zedekiah the *wisdom of propitiating Nebuchadnezzar* by his voluntary submission and surrender of the city.

2. *Conditional ameliorations promised.* For in this sense we must read verses 4 and 5. The *condition* on which these ameliorations are pledged is this: "Yet

hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah;" it is *an appeal to "heed"* the message; and means, *bow to God's purposes, submit to the Babylonian yoke*, for God so designs it shall be.

The *ameliorations* promised are these: Obey and submit, and thy *life shall be spared*, thou shalt *die in peace* at Jerusalem, and be buried with royal honours in the sepulchre of thy fathers; for, doubtless, Nebuchadnezzar would have preserved Zedekiah as his reigning vassal had he been still submissive to Babylon.

IV. The historic sequel. Zedekiah refused his opportunity, was taken face to face with Nebuchadnezzar; "his eyes beheld the eyes of the king of Babylon;" and then *his sons and nobles were slain before him;* following this harrowing spectacle, *he himself was deprived of sight;* he was *dragged to Babylon in chains*, and there *cast into prison where he languished till his death* (chap. lii. 10, 11). Comp. Homily on chap. xxxii. 1–5.

Vers. 8–22. Perfidy and Punishment.

Zedekiah summoned his people to a general release of the bondservants of Jerusalem. This act was according to—

I. Covenant obligations (vers. 13–15). A Levitical law enacted that owners of slaves of Hebrew blood should set them free after six years' service (Exod. xxi. 2). Later, this law was extended to females (Deut. xv. 12). Parents could sell their children into this limited slavery, which was no more than a modern apprenticeship (Exod. xxi. 7; Neh. v. 5), and the poor could so sell themselves. It was a *contract of service*, absolutely restricted in duration.

On no plea could owners of slaves refuse the liberty which was their divine right at the end of their period of service. And God had enacted that, at the close of the contracted term, masters should send their slaves away generously provided with necessaries and comforts (Deut. xv. 14). This contract arrangement made—

1. *Servants faithful.* 2. *Masters considerate.* 3. *Class relationships mutually helpful and safe.*

II. Prudential observance. *The king*, disobedient to God's messages through Jeremiah, would not be likely now to act from any religious or conscientious motive in his covenant with the people to proclaim liberty (vers. 8, 9). His policy was to bind the freedmen to the defence of the besieged city.

Albeit, "*the people who entered into the covenant*" (ver. 10) may have *responded under a sense of danger*, for the enemy was near their gates; and may even have risen to something of *patriotic* enthusiasm; but the motive was not religious. There was *no reverence for God* in their act, *neither magnanimity to their slaves.*

1. *Good acts may have bad motives.* 2. *A godless heart is not likely to prompt noble purposes.*

III. Execrable perfidy. Scarcely had the slaves been set free than the Egyptian forces appeared against the Chaldean besiegers and drew Nebuchadnezzar for awhile off from the siege (ver. 21). Elate with mad joy, the masters at once forced back their servants into renewed bondage, thus violating all faith and outraging every instinct of generosity (vers. 10, 11, and 16).

1. *To break faith with man is villanous in itself.* 2. *It engenders worst feelings in those who are wronged.* 3. *It invokes the dire displeasure of God;* for "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

IV. Parallel punishment (vers. 17–25). Ye were "brought out of the house of bondmen" in Egypt; why destroy the bridge for others over which you passed yourselves?

1. *God's awful liberation of wrong-doers.* "Behold, I proclaim a liberty for you" (ver. 17): *abandon you* as your Guardian and Lord.

2. *Sinners' appalling doom.* "I will make you to be removed" (ver. 17); *i.e.*, "to *be a horror*" (see *Lit. Crit.*)

Then follow definite declarations of misery: *national disaster* (vers. 19, 20); *royal degradation and woe* (ver. 21); *ruin on the land* (ver. 22). Having *deceived their slaves* with a vain hope of liberty, so they now *deceived themselves*, in thinking themselves saved from the Chaldeans because they had temporarily withdrawn. God will "*liberate*" them from all further connection with Him, to pass under the *terrible bondage* of other taskmasters. The breakers of covenants with God will be cut in pieces, as the calf between whose parts they passed. Doom swiftly came. "I will repay, saith the Lord!"

Vers. 8–11. Hypocritical Repentance Distinguished from True Conversion.

i. The *occasion* may be the same in both; *i.e.*, external distress (comp. *e.g.* Isa. xxviii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 32; Titus ii. 12).

ii. The *inward disposition* entirely differs. In false penitence the mind and heart remain unchanged; in true conversion man turns inwardly with pain and sorrow from evil and to God.

iii. The *duration* is the test of its character. False penitence lasts as long as the outward need; true repentance is a permanent condition of the heart; and, notwithstanding single backslidings, advances to a more complete subjugation of the old self.—*Naegelsbach.*

Hypocrites, when they show repentance, do it—

i. Not from *faith*, but from *fear of distress and danger*, in which they are at the time.

ii. They do *not cease all disobedience to God*, but only make some *ethical reforms*, as here in observing the jubilee year, as if there were no other reforms to be made.

iii. They specially select *such lines of conduct as are ostentatious*; as will attract public attention and win regard; as in this act of manumission of the slaves, which would loose the rabble, make a great noise and show.

iv. Meanwhile there are none, or *few thoughts of faith, love, fear of God, hope, and thanksgiving.*

v. Such penitence *does not last long*, but as soon as the distress finds a hole the devotion goes with it.—*Cramer.*

"As Zedekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, on finding themselves besieged, set at liberty their Hebrew servants, and pretended they would observe the law of God; but afterwards, imagining they had nothing to fear, changed their minds, and made slaves of their brethren; thus sinners pretend to humble themselves, and seem disposed to repentance, while they are threatened and the danger is near; but as soon as their fears are over, they break their promises and return to their sins. Jeremiah's reproaches and threatenings of the Jews for their impious and unjust proceedings show that a repentance and a reformation which is but of short duration, *instead of pacifying God, only provokes Him the more*; and that those who violate *His covenant and their own promises* shall not escape the punishment which their infidelity and hypocrisy deserve."—*Ostervald.*

"Like the detested tribe
Of ancient Pharisees, beneath the mask
Of clamorous piety, what numbers veil
Contaminated, vicious hearts! How many
In the devoted temple of their God,
With hypocritic eye, from which the tear
Of penitential anguish seems to flow,
Pour forth their vows, and by affected zeal
Pre-eminent devotion boast; while vice
Within the guilty breast rankles unseen!"
—*Hayes.*

"*Hypocrisy*, detest her as we may
(And no man's hatred ever wronged her yet),
May claim this merit still: that she admits
The worth of that she mimics with such care,
And thus gives virtue indirect applause."
—*Cowper.*

"No man's condition is so base as his,
None more accursed than he; for man esteems
Him hateful 'cause he seems not what he is;
God hates him 'cause he is not what he seems."
—*Quarles.*

Violation of the Law of Liberty.

"Ye had done right in My sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; but ye turned and polluted My name" (vers. 15, 16).

Cicero, when commending humanity and kindness towards servants, urged, Let them not be treated as slaves, but as those who are hired (*Off.* i.)

These Jews, in neglecting the legal manumission of their servants, and holding them in unjust bondage, in vain complained of oppression by the Chaldeans or Assyrians; for they themselves were acting the tyrant's part. But we recoil from enduring the sufferings we inflict. Here observe that God—

I. Recalls their history and experience (ver. 13). Hence for—

1. *Their own freedom from tyranny* they were indebted to *God's gratuitous mercy* and mighty power.

2. *Their experience of such Divinely secured* liberty should have led them to *cherish the freedom of their dependants.* It was God's will that they whom He had redeemed should retain the blessings of freedom; and, that a *memorial* might exist amongst them, of both *their own bondage* and *emancipation*, He covenanted with them that *servitude should be temporary.*

II. Reproves the national neglect of His law.

1. They *knew this Divine law*, yet held back liberty from their bondservants (vers. 14, 18). Note how our Lord condemns *such* disobedience (Luke xii. 4).

2. Though they had at length set their bondmen free, it was *not in voluntary recognition of God's established law*, but in *obedience to an edict of Zedekiah.* Observe the word in ver. 10, "they *obeyed*"—reluctantly, but perforce. Where God's word is clearly made known, there is no excuse for neglecting it (Isa. xlv. 19). But its neglect is consequent upon our "*hearkening not*, nor *inclining* our ear" (ver. 14).

III. Commends their present observance of the covenant. "Ye were now (lit., *to-day*) *turned*, and had *done right*" (ver. 15).

1. Though reformation *came tardily*, yet God *approved it* when effected. "*To-day*," after so long a time; yet ye "turned."

2. *Right deeds are pleasing to God, per se*, apart from the *motives of their doers.* He approves *fidelity* and *righteousness* wherever He sees them, even though He who searcheth the heart sees there is no love of righteousness there. Jewels are precious things even though worn by the vulgar. But God commended their temporary repentance and reformation only to show how detestable was their falsity in *doing insincerely* what they did, and *returning so quickly* to iniquitous oppression.

IV. Denounces their base hypocrisy of heart. "Ye made a covenant *before Me* in the house" &c. (ver. 15).

1. Their after conduct only *exhibited their falsity* in making the "covenant." Their intentions went not with their vows made before God. All they did therefore, in His house, was a pretence; they acted a lie before God. They trifled with God!

2. *To use the solemnities of religion insincerely* is *guiltiest profanation.* "Ye polluted My name" (ver. 16). It was evident that they were lost to all sanctity of feeling and shame for their baseness and wrong, that they could thus *abuse an oath made before God*, taking "God's name" in vain, and *defile God's temple*, by acting a lie within its solemn precincts.

Notes—

1. Their promptitude in manumitting their slaves was *generously commended by God;* but by doing this in bad faith they treated God with mockery.

2. It is an intolerable profanation of God's name when thus *falsely appealed to;* it is *perjury allied to sacrilege.*

3. Rebellion against God becomes even *more base when a pretence is made of obedience and reform*, as these men perfidiously acted in giving liberty to their slaves, and then forcing them into subjection so soon afterwards.

4. To this *perjury* and *profanity* was added *inhumanity;* for they "*brought* them into subjection" (ver. 16), the word meaning to employ *force*. It was an act of unbridled tyranny. And "he shall have *justice without mercy* that showeth no mercy."

CHAPTER XXXV.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. *Seventeen years earlier* than the preceding narrative of the manumission of the slaves; about the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign. From ver. 11 we find that these Rechabites were driven from the desert-scenes they inhabited into Jerusalem for shelter, consequent upon the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar. These conquests began with the victory at Charchemish; and at the end of the same year as that decisive battle against Egypt, he invaded Judea, in order to quell Jehoiakim's revolt (comp. 2 Kings xxiv. 1, 2). *Cf.* Notes on chaps. vii. and xx.

2. National Affairs. The defeat of the Egyptians at Charchemish had produced on all surrounding nations a sense of insecurity. These Rechabites, apprehensive of peril, took refuge within Jerusalem, pitching their black tents on the open spaces inside the city's walls,—a remarkable and admonitory sight!

3. Personal Allusions. Ver. 2. See *infra* on "*Rechabites.*" Ver. 3. "*Jaazaniah:*" unknown except from this reference. "*Son of Jeremiah:*" not the *prophet* Jeremiah; it was a frequent name. "*Habaziniah:*" apparently, from the form of this allusion to him, the chief of the Rechabites at this time. Ver. 4. "*Hanan:*" being called here "a man of God," leads some to connect him with Hanani (2 Chron. xvi. 7, xix. 2). "*Igdaliah:*" the Hebrew form, *Yigdalyahu*, is more commonly contracted into *Gedaliah*. Ver. 6. "*Jonadab, son of Rechab,*" belonged to the Kenites (1 Chron. ii. 55), the Arabian tribe which entered Canaan with the Israelites. He was an Arab chief, and created a semi-Jewish religious sect, which we here find in existence nearly three hundred years after.

4. Manners and Customs. Vers. 6, 7. "*Drink no wine,*" &c. See *infra* on "*Rechabites.*"

5. Literary Criticism. Ver. 2. "*The house of the Rechabites:*" not the *dwelling-house, for* they had none, they lived in tents; but "house" in the sense of *family*.

TOPICAL SURVEY OF CHAPTER XXXV.

THE RECHABITES' VOW OF ABSTINENCE.

"*Give them wine to drink*" (ver. 2); "We *will drink no wine*" (ver. 6).

For nearly three centuries these descendants of Jehonadab had abstained from intoxicants. God sent Jeremiah with a *test* of fidelity to their vow; not a *command* to violate it. They avowed their unfaltering purpose to stand faithful to their habit and pledge of abstinence.

Habitual abstinence from intoxicants may be urged therefore as—

I. Founded on precedent. Reverence for their ancestor kept them loyal for so long a period. Such an *example has its influence; awakening respect for him who sets it; urging the duty of imitation upon others.*

II. Approved by utility. Had drinking wine been permitted, it would have entailed the culture of the vine, and that would require settled residence. But Jonadab wished to maintain among his followers the *purer morality* and *manlier habits* of the desert, as contrasted with the laxity and effeminacy of city life. Abstinence would keep them independent of *decoys to luxury*, and out of the reach of *city allurements and influences.*

III. Desirable for safety. *Character* is safer if abstinence is practised. *Simplicity of life* is less open to contamination if the *company* of wine-drinkers is shunned. *Mental perceptions and moral obligations* are less likely to be *obscured and obliterated* in abstainers, as this chapter emphatically proves.

See Addenda: ABSTINENCE.

The Rechabites' Constancy.

"Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, *commanded* us" (ver. 6). "We have *obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us*" (ver. 10).

I. Obedience to man and disobedience to God contrasted (vers. 12–15).

1. *For three hundred years* (*cf.* 2 Kings x. 15) *the sons of Rechab implicitly obeyed the injunction of their father Jonadab.*

(1.) Obedience to this injunction required great self-denial, singularity of conduct, and many privations.

(2.) Notwithstanding these requirements, the sons of Rechab are the most illustrious examples of filial obedience the world has ever known.

2. *The Jewish nation, called the children of God, have never continued for one hundred consecutive years obedient to their Father in heaven.*

(1.) Not because God had not given them plain and earnest injunctions (ver. 15).

(2.) Not because they could not obey (ver. 16, *loc. cit.*)

3. *This contrast is a sad one, and is true in our day.*

II. God sets His seal of approval on filial obedience (vers. 16–19).

1. *The surest and mightiest agency we have for the establishment of righteousness on the earth is filial obedience to that which is good.*

2. *The reflexive power of filial obedience is a mighty force in the establishment of true character.*

III. The peculiar injunction of Jonadab in respect to total abstinence from intoxicants is worthy the careful study of parents and statesmen, as well as that of the Church of Christ (Jer. xxxv. 6).

1. *Can anything short of total abstinence ensure our youth and nation from drunkenness and all its fearful consequences?*

2. *Can there be any valid argument offered against this form of self-denial?*

3. *Would not the domestic, social, and national benefits accruing from total abstinence amply repay every Christian parent and patriot for its practice?*

—Rev. D. C. Hughes.

See Addenda: Permanence of the Rechabites.

Vers. 18, 19. Obedience to Traditions of Ancestors.

Rechabites originally Kenites (Judges i. 16; 1 Chron. ii. 55). Attached to Moses by a near and dear connection (Exod. ii. 21); and, agreeing with Israelites in worship of Jehovah, the Kenites followed them to Canaan, where they dwelt peacefully. God cared for their safety (1 Sam. xv. 6); and hundreds of years after we find them still a distinct people, held up by God as example to Jews for their attachment to customs of ancestors, and honoured by Him with gracious and remarkable promise of perpetual endurance of their family.

Told little of Jonadab, though in honour of him the Kenites changed their name to Rechabites (comp. this chapter with 2 Kings x.) Evidently a man of high character and popularity, for Jehu paid him extraordinary respect and attention; and we may guess, from the manner in which Jehu commends his own zeal, that he had been remarkable, in those evil and irreligious times, for fidelity to God, notwithstanding the threats and enticements of Ahab and Jezebel, and the bad example of Israelitish nation. Great influence over his clan; for two hundred years after his death we find them here observing his injunctions. God contrasts this with Jews' indifference to ordinances of Divine authority. We cannot fix on any clan of the Kenites in whom this promise has been fulfilled; yet doubtless, though having forgotten their own ancestry, they are divinely preserved among

the wandering tribes of those wildernesses where Rechabites dwelt. From this example may be inferred—

I. How well-pleasing in God's sight is obedience to parental authority, respectful attention to the discipline and traditions of former times, when these are recommended to us by the example and authority of good and honourable ancestors. (1.) Where the institutions of society are preserved, the permanence of the society is greatly secured. (2.) God here gives promise of perpetuity. (3.) The specific reason given (ver. 18), because they adhered to the rules of their ancestors. Yet these rules were *not divinely imperative;* they related to things strictly indifferent, abstain from wine and live in tents. Hence, God regards with no common approbation adherence to customs and traditions of forefathers (Prov. xxi. 24).

There are, however, *limitations* to this rule—

1. The precept or custom, if it be not good in itself, must at least be *a matter of indifference.* What at first was evil cannot become good by lapse of time. No precedent can make lawful what God has forbidden.

2. If this ordinance, though in itself harmless, should produce any breach of God's laws; if it should, in time, become so applied as to become mischievous, the commandment of God *must not be made of none effect by our tradition.* Where two authors are at variance, God must be heard, not man (Matt. xv. 5, 6; Mark vii. 11–13). The custom, in order to be binding, must be lawful.

3. *It must proceed from competent and authoritative persons.* Jonadab was probably a chieftain, but his regulations had continued for two hundred years; this origin and antiquity gave force to his rules. But the rules of human wisdom, and those absolutely and universally binding, given by God Himself, must be distinguished. Must not "teach as *doctrines* the commandments of men." Thus the Rechabites did not violate God's moral code, as though inferior in importance to the laws of their society; and, though a breach of those laws in their community could be punished with expulsion, they did not count others accursed who enjoyed *moderately* indulgences they forbade. Jeremiah drank wine before them yet they treated him with respect and deference.

4. There may be cases of *necessity for the repeal or suspension of such human and ceremonial customs* or laws. Thus here they fled to *houses* for protection from Assyrian invaders (ver. 11). So our Saviour "profaned" the ceremonial rules about the Sabbath (Matt. xii. 7). But for no ends must God's laws be violated, however good we deem them. The Ruler of heaven and earth has no need of our insolent and impious interference.

II. With these restrictions, obedience to existing laws and institutions is pleasing to God, and here received a very marked approbation. Hence—

1. The *falsehood* of their opinion who think that *laws merely human have no sanction* except in the *punishments* they inflict.

2. *A caution in times of change,* when novelties are sought with frantic eagerness. Taught reverence for ancient precedent.

Fondness for change is displeasing to God; for—(1.) It is a symptom and stimulus to a lightness of mind unfriendly both to happiness and piety. (2.) New customs, or systematic departure from ancient habits, arise almost always from vanity, or something worse. (3.) Where a rule is harmless, it is almost always advantageous; increases our habits of obedience, and therefore not without inherent grace.

Hence it is *necessary to obey,* not only for wrath but also for conscience' sake; the wisest of men exhorts us *not to meddle with those who are given to change.* Jeremiah commands us *not to exchange old ways for new ones;* and a *Divine blessing rests on those who reverence ancestral institutions.*

III. *If human regulations are observed,* though burdensome, can we reflect without shame on our continued disobedience to Divine commands? (vers. 13, 14.) Deep contrition and alarm shall awake within us. We need God's forgiveness for

former provocations; and that He may not call on us in vain hereafter, we need *hearts subdued* by the searching graces of His Holy Spirit, through the merits and mediation of our Saviour.—*Condensed and arranged from Bishop Reginald Heber*, A.D. 1838.

See Addenda: Obedience to Ancestors.

The Rewards of Obedience.

"*The words of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me*" (ver. 14).

The historical circumstances first demand attention.

The family of the Rechabites were descendants of Jethro, father-in-law of Moses; came into Canaan with the Israelites, and settled in southern part of Judea; were worshippers of the true God, but did not conform to Jewish rites. It has ever been deemed a great difficulty in political economy to maintain "an empire within an empire;" but this little tribe solved the problem; for it preserved an independent existence among the Israelites for nearly one thousand years, and, though neither acknowledging their worship nor their laws, was suffered to remain undisturbed by ambition or religious persecution.

They accomplished this result thus:—About five hundred years after their settlement in Canaan, lived that Jonadab, a very distinguished man among his people; is said to have assisted Jehu in rooting out idolatry from Israel. He saw that his people were but a handful among a more powerful people, and likely soon to be swallowed up by their neighbours, and he hit upon a happy method of preserving their independent existence. 1. He enjoined them "not to drink wine;" this was to *save them from luxury and intemperance*, which would prey upon them from within, and make them ripe for destruction. 2. Also commanded them "not to till the ground, nor to have any houses, nor to dwell in cities;" this was in order that they might *have no riches to tempt others to make war upon them*; and thus, to use his own words, "they might live many days in the land wherein they were strangers." Luxury and wealth are the bane of nations, and by keeping his tribe a simple, pastoral people, pure in their habits, and destitute of property, he accomplished his wishes for them.

I. Notice the obedience of the Rechabites, *contrasted with the disobedience of Israel to God.* An ancestor of that family, dead nearly three hundred years, had issued his commands, and they were still obeyed; but the living God had spoken repeatedly to Israel, by His prophets, yet they would not hear. The commands of Jonadab, too, were *very arbitrary.* There could be no sin in cultivating the fields, or in living in houses, whatever moral worth there may have been in the precept to drink no wine; but still, because Jonadab commanded it, they obeyed. Compelled by necessity to disobey him on this occasion; for when the Chaldeans invaded the land, they were obliged to go and dwell in Jerusalem for protection. And here occurred the trial of their obedience by Jeremiah. He called the family together, and set wine before them, inviting them to drink, not tempting them to break their pledge, but knowing that they would keep it, and meaning thereby to reprove the Israelites. They refused the wine, and pleaded the command of Jonadab as their excuse. How pointed was then the rebuke of the prophet! Jonadab was obeyed. But the Israelites—who had *reasonable*, not arbitrary, laws from *God*, not from a frail mortal; from the *living* God, who had loaded them with benefits, and could still reward them; not from a dead ancestor who had done little for them, and could do nothing more—had rebelled against their Maker, and would not hearken unto Him.

The complaint of God has still an application.

It is a fact, that among sinners, any and *every law, precept, or tradition, of mere human authority*, is *better obeyed* than the laws of God Himself. No matter who speaks, if he has gained credit among his fellowmen; no matter how absurd the law or usage, if it has been sanctioned by custom or a good name, there is obedience such as God cannot win. "I am come in My Father's name," said our Lord, "and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

See, in a few instances, *how this has been verified. Mahomet* arose, a sensualist, an adulterer, a breaker of treaties, and a robber, and issued his commands, which for centuries have been religiously obeyed. At the cry of the muezzin, and the hour of prayer, every follower of his, whether in the desert, on board the ship, in the city, or the field, suspends his labour, his pleasures, and even his griefs, and casts himself upon his knees in prayer. No scoffing looks of those of another creed can make him forego this, no distance from home leads him to forget it; but whether he be in gay Paris or his own Stamboul, he omits not his ablutions or devotions. But the *blessed Jesus*, pure, peaceful, and glorious, speaks, and even those who acknowledge Him as Lord over all, and own the goodness of His commands, can listen to such words as, "This do in remembrance of Me," and obey them not.

The *founder of some monkish order*, again, has enjoined upon all his fraternity certain rules and austerities, and he is obeyed. Day after day, and year after year, the same tedious round of ceremonies is gone through with, as though salvation depended upon it, and the deluded ones will rise at the midnight hour to inflict stripes upon themselves or to offer prayer. But *Christ may enjoin the reasonable duty* of praying to our Father in spirit and in truth, and multitudes can suffer days and years to pass, and pray not.

The commander of *the order of Jesuits* can place his inferior priests in any country of the world, and whether the mandate be to act as father-confessor in some palace, or to penetrate to China or Paraguay, there is no more resistance nor apparent regard for the sacrifices to be made than in the machinery which is moved by mechanic power. Christ commands His disciples to "go preach the Gospel to every creature," but only here and there one goes forth. The Rechabites of modern times, and *Sons of Temperance*, may institute a vow of temperance, and it is kept; or command one of their number to minister to the sick, and it is done; or provide well for their poor; but Christ says that "no drunkard shall enter heaven," and enjoins charity to the sick and the destitute, while many heed Him not.

Caution:—1. Because religion is less powerful than something else to enforce obedience, we are *not to think less of its truth*. Said an infidel, "Temperance societies are better than Christianity, because they can produce reforms which your boasted religion has failed to achieve." But temperance societies were originated by Christians, and have achieved the good they have done through Christian influence.

2. The lack of *power to compel obedience* does not prove the lack of *right to claim it*. Heathenism is not better than Christianity, because it can speak and be so literally obeyed; nor Popery than Protestantism, because the commands of pope or priest are received with a more implicit deference; nor Mahometanism better than our faith, because its followers so strictly heed the false prophet's precepts. When *God* speaks there is always a reason why His commands are disobeyed—Men speak and are obeyed, because they do not command *an utter renunciation of sin*, they only enjoin some external duty or moral obedience which may leave the heart to sin in other matters as it pleases; while God demands holiness in everything, and, therefore, fails of receiving obedience. What a proof have we hence of the necessity of a new heart! What a motive to pray for such a change!

II. The rewards of obedience. That family of Rechabites remained an independent community for about one thousand years, that is, during all the time that the Israelites continued in their land. God promised, as reward for their filial piety, temperance, and contempt of luxury, "that Jonadab, the son of Rechab, should not want a man to stand before him for ever."

Modern travellers, moreover, state that the Rechabites are still in existence. Mr. Wolf, the famous Jewish missionary, asserts this as his belief. "And another traveller who visited a tract to the south of Judea, which has been unexplored for centuries, met there a native who claimed to be a Rechabite, and when an Arabic Bible was shown to him, turned to this chapter and read from it the description of his people, and said that it was still true of them, and that they still kept the precepts of Jonadab their father. Over three thousand years have passed away since that family of the Kenites came with Israel into Canaan, and for two thousand years no traces of them were preserved; but now, after so long a lapse of time, recent discoveries have brought them to light, retaining their name, and glorying in their independence. Though surrounded by Mahometan Arabs, they conform to the law of Moses, yet maintaining that they are not Israelites; and are much hated by the Mussulman." This account was given by a traveller so late as 1832, and is confirmed by English residents at Mocha, and from other sources.

Note.—We have here *one of the most extraordinary accomplishments of prophecy* on record. A little handful of people, not larger than one of our Indian tribes, has kept upon the same spot for about one hundred generations, while all the neighbouring nations have undergone change and dissolution.

No doubt every promise of God's Word is as abundantly fulfilled. We may not always be able to trace out their literal accomplishment as strikingly as in this case, but we never could prove one promise in all the Bible false; and the more light we have the more abundantly do we see that all have been "yea and amen." Let us rest upon God's Word. Exceeding great and precious promises are given to us in the sacred book. They are like good notes from a prompt paymaster, falling due at different times.

And all *the precious promises of eternity* shall yet be realised by God's people: about "the golden city," and "the harpers with their harps," and "the innumerable company of saints and angels," and "the glory of God filling the temple." The unchangeable faithfulness of God to His declarations is a most delightful theme to a Christian. It is the rock on which he rests. God has promised; he believes.

Happy the man who has *these precious promises for his own*, and can use them and rely upon them!—*Rev. W. H. Lewis, D.D., Brooklyn*, 1871.

OUTLINES ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XXXV.

Ver. 4. *Theme:* "A MAN OF GOD."

Between a man of God in the Old Testament and a Christian in the New, no difference; convertible terms: alike in all that relates to moral character and religious faith. Called "a man *of God*" because he is *God's workmanship:* He made him what he is. "By the grace of God I am what I am."

He is *the noblest* of God's works; the *highest type of man.*

I. He is the holiest of men.

1. Every *holy thing* under heaven he admires: *holy Bible*, holy *Sabbath*, Sanctuary, Supper, &c.

2. Every *holy duty* he loves: *prayer, praise*, &c.

3. His love of *holy men* is noticeable: the "holy brethren" of whatever Church.

II. He is the wisest of men.

1. His wisdom is seen in the *provision he makes for his everlasting* future.

2. He is *prepared for all the contingencies of time:* for storms, he has anchorage; for temptations, "the whole armour of God," &c.

III. He is the best of men.

1. He has been "*created after the image* of Him who created him."

And he is the best who is most God-like.

2. He is best *adapted to promote the glory of God.*

IV. He is the richest of men.

1. His wealth is of *the highest kind:* spiritual riches.

2. His wealth he can *never lose:* durable riches.

V. He is the most honoured of men.

1. To him belongs the *honour of sonship.*

2. Of *priesthood.*

3. Of *daily converse with God.*

4. Of being *clothed with the garments of salvation.*

VI. He has the fairest prospects of all men.

1. Of an "*abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom* of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. Of a *deathless, felicitous existence.*

3. Of association with the *purest, noblest, highest of beings.*

4. Of "an *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled,*" &c.

Who would not wish to be "a man of God"?—*Rev. D. Pledge,* "*Walks with the Prophet Jeremiah.*"

Note.—*Trapp* observes that this "man of God" was a priest and prophet, or teacher of the people. So in the New Testament others are called God's *children,* His *servants,* and His *people;* but *ministers only* are called "God's men" (1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 17).

Ver. 15. *Theme:* GOD'S EARNESTNESS IN DEALING WITH SINNERS. "Rising up early," &c.

See Homily on chap. vii. 13.

Ver. 15. *Theme:* SINNERS ADMONISHED TO RETURN TO GOD. "*Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings; and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers.*"

The Israelites were a rebellious people; but He "sent His servants the prophets, rising up early," &c. God desires not the death of a sinner. To save men from present and eternal ruin, He appointed Christ as the Mediator. He has sent His servants to proclaim this mercy, and to invite sinners to return to the enjoyment of His favour. And what is the design of the Gospel ministry now? It is "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God," &c. (Acts xxvi. 18).

I. What the exhortation presupposes.

1. *That there has been a departure from God.* "Return ye."

2. *This departure is universal.* "Every man." "For all have sinned," &c. (Rom. iii. 10, 19–23).

3. *This departure is flagrantly wicked.* "Evil way." (*a*) Evil in its *nature;* (*b*) evil in its *influence;* (*c*) evil in its *consequences.*

II. To what reforms the exhortation points. "Return ye," &c.

1. *Deep conviction of the evil and dangerous nature of a wicked career.*

2. *Contrition of heart, and confession of sin to God.*

3. *The renunciation of every evil way.*

4. *Supreme love and loyalty to God.*

III. Compliance with this request is urgent. "Return ye *now,*" because—

1. *Life is short and uncertain.*

2. *Sin is hardening and deceitful.*

3. *You will escape the greatest evils and realise the most exalted pleasures.*

4. *The longer you delay the less probability there is that you will ever return.*

5. *The present is the only time in which we are authorised to tell you you can be saved.*

IV. The happy result of returning to God. "Ye shall dwell in the land."

1. *The land.* The Israelites entered Canaan. But Canaan a faint type of heaven to which believers are called.

2. *It will be the residence of God's people.* "Ye shall dwell" there in fulness of joy, and at God's right hand. Your "sun shall no more go down."

—*Helps for the Pulpit.*

Ver. 15. *Theme:* SINNERS SUMMONED TO SELF-IMPROVEMENT. "*Amend your doings.*"

See Homily on chap. vii. 3.

Ver. 16. *Theme:* TRUE OBEDIENCE SHOWN IN THE CONTRASTED CONDUCT

of Israel and the Rechabites. "*But this people hath not hearkened unto Me.*"

The Rechabites' obedience to their ancestor's command is *in itself* praiseworthy and exemplary. It is perfectly *accordant with the Fourth Commandment.*

Were the Rechabites equally conscientious in their observance of the DIVINE *commands?* Would not a custom *contrary* to the Divine command have been retained with equal tenacity on the authority of their chief?

Still—

I. The Rechabites put Israel to shame, in so far as they obey the command of their earthly ancestor, while the latter does not obey the Lord's command.

II. The obedience of the Rechabites to the command of their earthly ancestor is, however, no pledge of their obedience to the commands of God.

III. Obedience to God's commands is guaranteed only among the spiritual Israel, *i.e.*, among those who by the Holy Spirit have become members of a higher order of nature, in which the will of God is written in the hearts of all, and has consequently become the innermost principle of life.

Or thus—

I. In respect to *legal obedience*, the Jews are surpassed by the Rechabites. Note the *difference* between Israel and the Rechabites in this respect.

II. The obedience of the Rechabites *to their ancestor* does not guarantee obedience *to God.* Note the *equality* of Israel and the Rechabites in this respect.

III. Only *spiritual Israel* bears in itself the guarantee of obedience to God. Note the *higher status* of the spiritual Israel over the Rechabites.—*Comp. Naegelsbach* in *Lange.*

Ver. 19. *Theme:* PERMANENCE OF THE RECHABITES. "Of so great a price in the sight of God is the virtue of *filial duty and obedience*, that it seldom falls of its reward even in this world. The law which enjoined it had a *promise of long life* attached to it (Exod. xx. 12); and it is distinguished by the Apostle as 'the first commandment with promise' (Ephes. vi. 2).

"And by this history of the Rechabites we may learn that the surest *way to entail a blessing on our children*, and to *perpetuate our names and families* in a numerous and virtuous issue, is to reverence and obey our own parents."—*Wogan.*

See Addenda: PERMANENCE OF THE RECHABITES.

ADDENDA TO CHAP. XXXV.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

OBEDIENCE TO ANCESTORS. Μὴ καλὸν κρίνειν σαντία τοῖς θεοῖς, πατρὶ καὶ διδασκάλῳ.—*Aris. Rhe.* "It is not good for a man to dissent from the gods, from his father, and from his teacher."

We read of a king of Poland who carried the picture of his father in a plate of gold about his neck; and when he was entering upon any great business he would kiss the picture and say, "God grant I may observe my father's charge, and do nothing unworthy of him."—*Trapp.*

Absalom's pillar (2 Sam. xviii. 18) is still standing, according to Sandys; and the Turks, whenever they pass, throw a stone at it, in token of their horror at his unnatural conduct against his father.

ABSTINENCE.

"Against diseases here the strongest fence
Is the defensive virtue Abstinence."
—*R. Herrick.*

"Though I look old, yet I am young and lusty;
For in my youth I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood."
—*Shakespeare.*

"Thou sparkling bowl! thou sparkling bowl!
Though lips of bards thy brim may press,
And eyes of beauty o'er thee roll,
And songs and dance thy power confess—
I will not touch thee; for there clings
A scorpion to thy side that stings."
—*J. Pierpoint.*

Diodorus tells us that the Nabathæans, for the preservation of their wandering habits and therefore of their *liberty*, forbade any one "either to sow corn, or plant fruit-trees, or drink wine, or build a house."

PERMANENCE OF THE RECHABITES. Information on this remarkable fact may be obtained from *Dr. Wolff's* "Journal of his Travels in Yemen and Mesopotamia," pp. 388, 389; and "Travels,"

li. pp. 298–300; and *Pusey* on "Daniel," p. 268. In Kitto's *Daily Bible Illustrations*, Evening Series, "Isaiah and the Prophets," will be found most helpful information on the "*Modern Rechabites.*"

Dr. Wolff's account is this:—At Jalovha, in Mesopotamia, a Rechabite was pointed out to him. "I saw one standing before me dressed and wild like an Arab, the bridle of his horse holding in his hand. I showed him the Bible in Hebrew and Arabic: he read both languages, and was rejoiced to see the Bible; he was not acquainted with the New Testament. After having proclaimed to him the tidings of salvation, and made him a present of the Hebrew and Arabic Bibles and Testaments, I asked him—

"'Whose descendant are you?'

"*Mousa* (that was his name), with a loud voice, 'Come, I show to you;' and then he began to read Jeremiah xxxv. 5–11.

"*Wolff.* 'Where do you reside?'

"*Mousa* (recurring to Gen. x. 27). 'At Hadoram, now called Samar by the Arab; at Usal, now called Sanaa by the Arabs; and (Gen. x. 30) at Mesha, now called Mecca, in the deserts around those places. We drink no wine, and plant no vineyard, and sow no seed, and live in tents, as Jonadab our father commanded us. Hobab was our father too. Come to us: you will find still 60,000 in number; and you see thus prophecy has been fulfilled. 'Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever.'"

"And saying this, Mousa mounted his horse, and fled away, and left behind him a host of evidence of Sacred Writ."

CHAPTER XXXVI

Critical and Exegetical Notes.—**1. Chronology of the Chapter.**—"*Fourth of Jehoiakim.*" See Note on chap. xxv.

2. National Affairs.—Jehoiakim was at that time vassal of Pharoah-Necho; but Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, carried off a few prisoners and some of the Temple treasures (Dan. i. 1, 2), and compelled Jehoiakim to become *his* vassal, thus subjugating the nation to Babylon instead of Egypt. This was a sore pang and degradation to Jehoiakim; and when Jeremiah prophesied (ver. 29) that "*the king of Babylon would again come to destroy the land and make man and beast cease from it*," the king's wrath became ungovernable.

In this critical condition of the nation, *invasion begun, conquest sure*, and *captivity imminent*, it became urgent that Jeremiah should *collect all his prophecies*—covering a period of twenty-three years—into "*a book*" (ver. 2), for their preservation as a witness of God's pleadings and warnings with the nation. This writing was completed in "*the ninth month:*" our December.

For Contemporaneous Scriptures and Contemporaneous History, *vide* Notes *in loc.* on chap. xxv.

3. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 2. "*Take thee a roll of a book and write.*" It was a roll of parchment skins. Ver. 9. "*Proclaimed a fast.*" The ordinary fast was in the seventh month (Lev. xvi. 29); but this was "*the ninth month*" (ver. 9), and was therefore an extra and special fast. Keil thinks this fast was to commemorate by a national humiliation the *capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans the previous year.* Ver. 22. "*The king sat in the winter-house.*" A separate portion of the palace specially used in the colder season (Amos iii. 15). "*A fire on the hearth,*" *lit.* "the fire-pan burning before him;" in the middle of the floor was a brasier in which the fire—charcoal—burned.

4. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 4. "*Baruch*" (see on chap. xxxii. 12): Ver. 10. "*Gemariah:*" not the Gemariah of chap. xxix. 3, but brother of Ahikam (xxvi. 24). Ver. 11. "*Michaiah:*" grandson of "*Shaphan,*" of whom see 2 Kings xxii. 3. Ver. 12. "*Elishama:*" a court prince, perhaps the same as mentioned xli. 1, 2 Kings xxv. 25. "*Elnathan:*" already had acted as an evil agent of the king's (xxvi. 22, 23). "*Hananiah,*" the false prophet (xxviii. 10–17). Ver. 14. "*Jehudi:*" doubtless of a good family from his ancestry being so carefully recited; but his office is unknown. Ver. 26. "*Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech:*" query, the son *of the king?* But Jehoiakim had then no grown-up son. Yet he might have been one of royal blood. "*Seraiah,*" &c., courtiers or princes.

5. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 7. "*It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord.*" The words תְּהִנָּתָם נָפְלָה mean to allow a petition to be laid at the feet of a superior: *lit.* "it may be their supplication will fall before Jehovah." Ver. 18. "*He pronounced all these*

words," &c. קָרָא מִפִּיו, definitely—he *recited from his mouth;* not, read from a book: oral dictation. *"Ink:"* the only occurrence of the word. דְּיוֹ, *ink*, may come from דָּיָה, *to be black.* Ver. 23. *"Cut it with the penknife;"* i.e. the scribe's knife with which he trimmed his reed for writing.

Note.—Chapters XXXVI.–XLIV. form a HISTORIC RECORD OF EVENTS (gathered up *into a volume* by express Divine command), ranging from *the fourth year of Jehoiakim* to the *close of Jeremiah's ministry.* These records divide themselves thus—

A. Chaps. XXXVI.–XXXVIII. Events *preceding* the Chaldean capture of Jerusalem.
B. Chapters XXXIX.–XLIV. Events *succeeding* that capture.

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER XXXVI.—Jeremiah's prophecies—

1. *Committed to writing* by Baruch (vers. 1–8).
2. *Rehearsed to all the people* (vers. 9, 10).
3. *Read to the princes* (vers. 11–19).
4. *Read in part to Jehoiakim*, then burnt by the king (vers. 20–26).
5. Jehoiakim's heavy denunciation (vers. 27–31).
6. The second roll—prophecies rewritten (ver. 32)

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XXXVI.

Vers. 2, 3. *Theme:* REVELATION IN WRITING. "Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil that I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

Ours is a documentary religion; and it is a great advantage to have the principles of our faith in a defined and a written form. *The prophet's pen succeeded his breath.*

An abstract of Jeremiah's preaching for twenty-three years was thus recorded. Baruch was to read it. It excited a great sensation. The princes conveyed it to the king: it was read in his presence: he took his penknife, cut it in pieces, cast it in the fire. But another was written with this awful addition: *Say to Jehoiakim* (vers. 30, 31).

Upon this account remark—

I. The Divine authority of the book. "This word came to Jeremiah."

1. It bears evident marks and indications of *having come from God.* Ours is a documentary religion—more sure than miracle—"a more sure word of prophecy." *If ye believe not Moses,"* &c.

2. *The time and the manner* in which this word comes to a people. It is distinctly marked by God Himself as a great crisis in their religious history. God dates from this event. Good men date from it too.

3. The Book can never *leave* us as it *finds* us.

II. The gracious design of the Scriptures. To bring us to *faith*, to *repentance* and *reconciliation to God* (vers. 3–7); not to condemn, but to save. It is to show us our danger and our refuge. Full of Christ.

III. The settled hostility it excites (vers. 22, 23). Men of corrupt minds love not the truth. Popery hates it. Many false Protestants dislike it too. They who do not take the penknife to destroy it, employ their pens to pervert and extinguish it.

IV. The righteous retribution its rejection incurs (vers. 29–31). The Gospel has a condemnation of its own as well as the law.

Comp. also Homily on chap. XXX. 2.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* "LITERA SCRIPTA MANET." The object of the writing was not alone that the word written might remain, but also to collect all the single lightning strokes into one grand prophetic tempest.

The written word was of special use—

i. *To contemporaries.* For it rendered possible—(1.) Continued study; (2.) quiet contemplation; (3.) careful comparison.

ii. *To posterity.* (1.) The mouth speaks only to *those present;* the pen to *the absent.* (2.) The mouth speaks only to *present hours and times;* the pen to centuries future.

Comp. Exod. xxxiv. 27; Deut. x. 4, 5, xvii. 18; Isa. xxx. 8; Hab. ii. 2.

—*Naegelsbach and Cramer.*

Also: *The blessings of the written word.*

i. That which it has *in common* with the spoken word. Preparation of the heart for the reception of salvation (ver.).

ii. That which it has *in distinction* from the spoken word. (*a*) It is present for every one; (*b*) it is present at every time and every place; (*c*) it is present in all its parts (for comparison).

—*Naegelsbach.*

See Addenda: REVELATION IN WRITING.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* "IT MAY BE." "*It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.*"

Jeremiah's ministry may be regarded as typical of God's dealings with man in all ages. "It may be."

I. This word shows us the heart of God. Words are the servants of things. Language is imperfect, but it is the chief interpreter of thought. What has been said of man, may be said, with reverence, of God: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." When God says, "It may be," we must not imagine that there is anything like doubt or ignorance with Him. It is said that He speaks as a man to men. How wonderful that He should thus condescend to our weakness and necessities! He not only employs human agents, but human speech, to reveal His will to us. Difficulties may be easily raised as to the form of speech here, but there can be no question as to its spirit. The words breathe love, and not hate. God is indeed displeased because of sin, but He longs to show mercy to the sinner. His heart yearns over His rebellious children, as the father over his prodigal son. Judgment is His strange work. Mercy is His delight. He welcomes the penitent. He blesses the obedient. All His counsels and warnings, His promises and threatenings, are for good. Mark the words of Moses (Deut. v. 29–33, xxxii. 44–47); of the prophets (Isa. i. 18–20; Jer. viii. 7–11; Ezek. xii. 3, xviii. 31; Hosea xi. 1–8); of Jesus Christ (John iii. 16, 17; Luke xix. 10, 41, 42). And so it is still. What John said of his Gospel may be said of the whole Bible, and indeed of all God's dealings with us in grace—"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name."

II. This word reveals the grand possibilities of human life. Looking on waste moorland, we may say, this will soon be reclaimed. That soldier standing in the ranks, beside thousands more, may yet rise to high command. That speaker, who has failed in his first effort, may yet lead the House of Commons. That child, over whose cradle his mother bends in fond anxiety, may yet hold a foremost place among men. He who was the joy of his mother's youth may be the pride and the stay of her old age. These and such like possibilities lie hid in the future. As yet, all is uncertain; we can only say, "It may be." But can there be such uncertainty with God? No. To His infinite mind, all the possibilities of time, and space, and circumstance, are not matters of doubt, but of certainty (Isa. xlvi. 9–11). Yet here, as often, He speaks as if it were otherwise. For our sakes He puts aside the *must be* of the Divine and the

absolute, for the *may be* of the human and the contingent. His dealings with Israel are spoken of as an experiment. The gracious purpose is plain, but the result is hidden. It depends upon causes not yet in full operation. It will be manifested in due time, in the free actings and choices of men. So it is with the ministry of grace in every age. Men are put upon trial (Deut. viii. 2; Luke ii. 34). Mark the grand possibilities.

1. *Earnest attention* (ver. 3). This is absolutely necessary. God's Word is truth. If He threatens, it is because there is just cause. His laws must be upheld. Wrath must come to the uttermost on the impenitent. If men considered this, surely it would awaken a holy fear of God's judgments. The tale of what God purposes to do to the sinner may well make the ears of every one that heareth it to tingle (1 Sam. iii. 11). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

2. *Penitential prayer* (ver. 7). "It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way." God cannot change. It is the sinner who must retrace his steps. He has forsaken God, and turned to his own evil way, and he is bound and besought to return. Prayer is the first step to a true amendment of life. It is when we look upon God as He has revealed Himself in Christ that we are melted to penitence, and that the cry of hope rises from our hearts (Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, lv. 6, 7).

3. *Moral reconciliation.* The hindrances to peace are not with God, but with us. Mark the touching words, "that I may forgive." God pities the sinner, but He cannot deal with him, in the way of absolution, till he has come to himself and is in earnest about salvation. God is willing to give, but the sinner may not have the heart to receive. On the other hand, when there is a real turning from sin unto God, how quick is the response! how complete and joyous the reconciliation! (Luke xv. 20–24; John i. 5–9.)

III. This word holds out encouragement to all true workers for Christ. Hope is the spring of all activity. What we deem impossible we do not attempt. Reason forbids. But what we know to be both possible and good, we can strive for with all our strength. Duty is ours, results belong to God. For three-and twenty years Jeremiah had laboured in Judah. His work seemed in vain. But he must not cease. The mercy of God is great. Another effort must be made. New methods must be tried. The Word must be written, and brought to bear in all its force upon the people, the princes, and the king. "It may be they will hear." The command given to Jeremiah and Baruch, is just the same in substance as that which was afterwards given to the apostles and ministers of Jesus Christ (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Acts v. 20, xviii. 9, 10). "It may be," implies faith, and love, and hope. It holds out encouragement to *prayer* (David, 2 Sam. xii. 22); to *holy endeavour* (Paul, Phil. iii. 8–14, iv. 13); to *benevolent and missionary enterprise* (Eccles. ix. 1–6; Rom. i. 16). In all that is for good, friend helping friend, parents training their children, Christian men and women labouring for the advancement of the Gospel, we may say as Jonathan did to his armour-bearer, when summoning him to a deed of high courage and daring, "Come: it may be the Lord will work for us" (1 Sam. xiv. 6). Nay, we may do more. We may say to ourselves, as Haggai to Zerubbabel, and to Joshua, and to all the people of the land, "Be strong and work, *for I am with you*, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Haggai ii. 4, 5). Our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. For the humblest worker, as well as for the great Master Himself, the word is true, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." —*Rev. W. Forsyth, from "Homiletic Quarterly."*

Ver. 7. *Theme:* An Open Door of Hope. "It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way; for great is the anger and the fury that the Lord hath pronounced against this people."

I. Menacing doom.

1. *Definite in its direction.* "Against this people."

2. *Terrible in its character.* "Great is the *anger* and the *fury*."

3. *Ominous as to its origin.* "That *the Lord* hath pronounced."

4. *Positive as to its announcement.* "*Hath* pronounced."

II. Possible escape. "It may be."

1. *Doom tarries* till all conditional exigences are expended. God holds back the stroke till every possibility of averting it is exhausted. He is "*slow to anger*."

2. *Sinners have the power of arresting their own doom.* Though it has been "*pronounced*" against them. As Nineveh.

3. Threatenings of God are designed to act as *appeals to men* to avert them. They are stern voices of love. His menaces are severe, and will eventually be fulfilled if not averted; but He makes them severe in order to arouse us to seek reconciliation and escape.

III. Conditions of deliverance.

1. *Not hard to comply with.*

2. *Not beyond the absolute necessities of the case.* They are—

(*a*) Penitential prayer. "Present their supplication."

(*b*) Individual reformation. "Return every one from his evil way."

Note.—This was urged "*upon the fasting day*" (ver. 6). So that *fasting* was not enough of itself (see Isa. lviii. 3, 5; Zech. v. 5, 7). And this appeal followed the *reading of the roll* (ver. 6). Thus *reading Scripture and self-mortification* should be added to *penitence and reformation.* All which, *in this Gospel age*, become summed up in—(*a*) "*Search the Scriptures*, for they testify of Me;" (*b*) *Take up thy cross* daily and follow Me;" (*c*) "Repentance towards God;" and (*d*) "Laying aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, let us run, *looking unto Jesus!*"

Vers. 11 and 13. *Theme:* THE HEARER BECOMES A PREACHER. "When Michaiah *had heard out of the book all the words of the Lord*, he went down to the king's house . . and *declared unto* [the princes] *all the words he had heard*," &c.

I. A hearer's responsibility. To carry tidings to *absent ones.* "Let him that heareth say, Come." If the Lord's words are *good for him*, they are also *good for others.*

II. A hearer's opportunity. He can *reach an audience* from which the preacher is excluded. *Family circles, official circles* [as in this case] may be brought to hear God's truth by one person reciting what he has heard.

III. A hearer's prompt anxiety. What he heard was *urgent*, was *ominous.* Others were entailed in the messages of God's Word. It was *not right for him to be silent.* The *doom* or *salvation* of others depended on his telling what he had heard. *Forthwith* he went, and *faithfully* he recited the facts of warning and counsel from God.

(1.) He became thus a *herald from God* to his friends.

(2.) He opened the way for *Jeremiah's roll to be read in their hearing* (ver. 15).

(3.) He brought them under *very solemn convictions* (ver. 16).

(4.) He won for God's servants *influential friends*, who protected them from the anger of the king (vers. 19, 25).

> "Can we whose souls are lighted
> With wisdom from on high,
> Can we, to men benighted,
> The light of life deny?"

Ver. 20. *Theme:* READING GOD'S WORD TO A KING. These princes *showed a gracious mind* toward Baruch and Jeremiah; for they did not force Baruch into the angry king's presence.

Yet they showed also a *timid and half-hearted sympathy;* for if they thought the "words of the Lord" urgent and important, why did they not boldly go in to the king and plead with him to heed the message?

Had they been *true patriots*, and *loyal to God's truth*, they would have acted a more emphatic part than they did.

But they secured this: the king heard God's word.

I. An involuntary hearer. They seem all together to have gone in and recited what they had heard (ver. 20). Jehoiakim was thus *taken by surprise*—stormed in

his unsuspecting ease. Often God sends messages *to* and *against* us—

1. Without our *wishing* to have them.
2. Without our *power to prevent* them.
3. In a manner *wholly unexpected.*

II. **An inquisitive hearer.** The fragmentary recital of "the words of the Lord" by the princes excited him to desire to hear from the roll itself. So (ver. 21)—

1. There may be an inquisitiveness *born of doubt.* Jehoiakim may have questioned whether they repeated the words correctly.

2. Or an inquisitiveness *prompted by anxiety.* He may have felt disturbed by what he heard, and wished to know the matter more fully.

3. Or an inquisitiveness *quickened by hope.* Possibly these princes stated only the dark side of things: if he heard more it might be less menacing.

4. Or an inquisitiveness *actuated by scorn.* So far from his being alarmed by the eager words of the princes, he was quite ready to hear more—let him hear it all: it mattered not to him!

III. **An infuriated hearer.** There "burned *before* him a fire" (ver. 22); and it but represented the fury which burned *within* him.

1. He burned with *mad impatience.* Stopped the reading: could not sit out the reading: heard only "three or four leaves" (ver. 23).

2. He burned with *impotent rage.* Became violent: paid no heed to the "intercessions" (ver. 25) of the three princes: wanted Jeremiah apprehended (ver. 26): issued a mandate then and there to Baruch that the prophet should be "taken."

3. He burned with *silly revenge.* He would destroy "the roll;" so "cut it with a penknife"—venting his malice on the innocent parchment! and then cast the roll into the fire, gratifying his ridiculous animosity by watching its consumption! (ver. 23.)

See Addenda: INFURIATED HEARERS.

Note—

1. Fires *can consume books*, but they *cannot consume truths!*

2. God's enemies who *make fires* may one day *feed them!* "The *fire* shall try every man's work." "He will *burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*"

See Addenda: BURNING BIBLES.

Ver. 23. *Theme:* THE RECKLESS PENKNIFE. "*When Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with a penknife.*"

We look in upon a room in Jerusalem. Two men there: Jeremiah, walking the floor, agitated, in the spirit of prophecy. Baruch, writing out the scathing words of the Almighty against the city.

It is winter. Jehoiakim sits in "winter house." Silence among his lords, princes, while the parchment is read. Every eye is fixed; king frowns, cheeks burn; foot comes down with thundering indignation; seizes penknife, and lashes it into the parchments.

Was the book destroyed? Did the king escape? In a little while Jehoiakim's dead body is hurled forth to blacken in the sun, "buried with the burial of an ass," while Baruch again writes the terrible prophecy which Jeremiah anew dictates.

It would take more penknives than cutler ever sharpened to hew into permanent destruction the Word of God. Yet that Oriental scene has been often repeated: there are thousands of Jehoiakims who *cut the Word of God with their penknives.*

I. The first to be mentioned is the man who **receives a part of the Bible, but cuts out portions and rejects them.**

But the *genuineness of the entire* Bible is established, and there may be no cutting out of books against which cavillers rail. If any part of the Old Testament had been uninspired, Christ would have said, "Search the Scriptures, *except* the book of—Jonah or Esther." And with all the Christian world watching, and our enemies also, you might as well attempt to insert an entire canto in Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a fresh page into the New Testament.

A man dies; people assemble to hear the Will read. One interrupts: "I reject that passage." But they must take the will as a whole, or not at all.

Remove one orb from this constellation of Bible books that revolve in splendour about Jesus, the central Sun, and heaven itself would weep at the catastrophe.

II. He who runs his knife through the Bible *from Genesis to Revelation and* rejects everything.

The hostility in the "winter house" exists yet. Enemies of this Book have tried to marshal on their side chemist's laboratory, astronomer's telescope, geologist's pry, mineralogist's hammer, &c. With the black hulk of their priestcraft they have tried to run down this Gospel ship speeding on errands of salvation.

Men strike their knife through this Book because they say that—

1. *The light of nature is sufficient.* Have the fire-worshippers of India, the Borneoian cannibal, &c., found it so? The pagodas of superstition, the infanticides of the Ganges, the gory wheels of Juggernaut, declare it is *not* sufficient. A star is beautiful, but it pours no light on the midnight of a sinful soul. "What must I do to be saved?" Sweltering nations have knelt at the foot of the Himalayan mountains for ages asking the question; but the mountain made no response. The cry has gone round the world, but the stars were dumb, and the Alps were silent, &c.

2. That the Book *is cruel and indecent.* But show one man made cruel or obscene by the Bible. Thousands have been lifted by it out of their sin.

3. That it is *so full of unexplained mysteries.* What! will you believe only in what can be explained? *Gravitation?* Your *finger nails;* how do they grow? I would know that the heights and depths of God's truth were not very great if I could, with my finite mind, read everything.

4. An infidel strikes his penknife through the Bible because, he says, *if it were God's Book, the whole world would have it.* He pleads that if God had anything to say to the world, He could not say it to only a small part of the race. But how is it God gives oranges and bananas to only a small part of our race? There are millions who have never seen an orange or a banana! If all the human race had the same climate, harvests, health, advantages, then, by analogy, you might argue God should give the Bible, if at all, to the whole world.

5. Objectors cut the Bible because they urge that *other books have in them great value and beauty.* True: *Confucius* taught kindness to enemies; the Shaster has great affluence of beauty; the Veda of the Brahmins has ennobling sentiments; but what is proved thereby?—that after searching all lands, and ages, and literature, there has been found but a portion of the wisdom and beauty which God's Book contains! Let Voltaire come on with his acute philosophy, and Hume with his scholarship, and Gibbon with his one-sided statements, and Hobbes with his subtlety; and the band of mountain shepherds and Galilee fishermen will beat all back with the cry of "Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

III. No *better proof of* the Divinity of this Book *can be desired* than that it has withstood this mighty and continuous attack, and come down to us without a chapter effaced, a miracle injured, or a promise scarred.

No other book has passed through such hostility. Yet this Book to-day is foremost. In *Philosophy*, it is honoured above the works of Descartes, Bacon, Aristotle, and Socrates. In *History*, it wins more respect than Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. In *Poetry*, it outshines the *Iliad* and *Odessey*, the *Inferno* and *Paradise Lost.* It has been published in more than two hundred languages; the earth quakes with the quick revolutions of its printing-press.

One verse of this Book above the throne of tyranny, and it shall fall; above the temples of superstition, and they shall crumble; above the wilderness, and it shall bloom as the Garden of the Lord. Thou Prince of Books, we hail thee to thy coronation! the wheeling earth thy chariot! the bending sky thy triumphal arch! the great heavens thy star-studded banner!

1. We have, then, *many reasons for believing the Bible.*

2. Raise the Book *higher in your estimation.*

3. *Take it to your heart*, your house. Though you seem to get along very well without the Bible in your prosperity, there will come a time when your only consolation will be this blessed Gospel.

A blind girl had been in the habit of reading the Bible with raised letters; by an accident her fingers lost their sensitiveness. In her sorrow, she raised the Book to her lips, to kiss it a farewell. As she did so she felt the letters with her lips—"The Gospel according to Mark." "Thank God!" she exclaimed, "I can read my Bible with my lips!"

Oh, in our last hour, when the world goes from our grasp, press this precious Gospel to our lips, that, in the dying kiss, we may taste its sweet promises. —*De Witt Talmage*, 1870.

Ver. 23. *Theme:* LABORIOUS SERVICE WASTED. "*All the roll was consumed in the fire.*"

I. A vast and toilsome task.

i. It occupied *a considerable time in preparation:* doubtless "the nine months," at least, of the fifth year of Jehoiakim (ver. 9).

ii. And it was *undertaken at God's command* (ver. 2).

iii. It had an *urgent and solemn aim in view* (ver. 3).

iv. It was *performed with anxious fidelity* (ver. 4).

v. It *occupied the energies of two devoted and gifted servants of Jehovah* (vers. 4, 17, 18).

II. Destroyed in a moment's caprice.

i. *Within a few hours of its completion.* Its reading before the people, princes, and king was all *on the same day;* and then it was destroyed.

ii. *Utterly destroying the entire product of devoted toil.* Not a vestige, not a leaf remaining.

iii. *Apparently rendering all the labour fruitless.* There on the fire smouldered the ashes of destroyed toil. "Strength spent for nought."

III. Yet effecting its full Divine purpose.

i. *Mighty consequences result from moments.* A lightning flash lasts but a second, yet it fells a forest, shivers a rock, blasts an edifice, scorches a life into instant death.

This roll *was read*, and though but *once heard*, it yet conveyed its message, and wrought its *different results:* on the people (ver. 7), on the princes (ver. 16), on the king (ver. 23).

ii. Man's wanton act of destruction is *included in God's arrangements.* He intended it as a test for the king, and it revealed to both people and princes (who had been solemnised by the reading) that the king was hopelessly defiant and *merited the destruction so soon to follow.*

iii. Hence *godly work should be done and left with God.* We may well be *satisfied* with the consciousness that we *have carried out His bidding.* If foes seem to *render our obedience useless*, that is God's matter, not ours. Sometimes *best results follow* the apparent *ruin* of our labours. It makes the way clear for God to follow on with His judgments (ver. 31).

IV. Ruined work should inspire to renewed service. "Then took Jeremiah another roll" (ver. 32).

i. *Go over again the path of obedience*, even though with bleeding feet.

ii. *Lose not faith in God though the toil seem monotonous.*

iii. *The recompleted service shall have something* added. "Many like words." For all work *done over again* becomes both *enlarged* and *improved;* and its *disciplinary effect upon the worker* may prove not the least of the advantageous results of the reattempted service. For the heart will learn to be *patient in Divine employ*, and *submissive to the Providential conditions* (of failure or success) amid which work for Him is fulfilled.

Paul said, "I have learned both *how to be abased* and how to *abound.*"

Ver. 24. *Theme:* HARDENED HEARERS. "*Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments;*" that is, the king and his attendant princes. Jeremiah records this with *amazement, sorrow*, and *alarm.*

I. Contrast the solemn fear of Josiah, this king's father (2 Kings xxii.

11, 19). The difference in their *acts* and their *end*. Jehoiakim's guilt was *aggravated* by reason of his *good father's example*.

II. Ponder the stolidity which habitual disobedience produces. This *defiant effrontery in the king* was the climax of long rejection of God's messages. This *immovable indifference* in his princes was the result of the king's *example and influence*.

III. Beware of hearing God's messages with heedlessness.

1. Begins with *inattention*.
2. Progresses into *wilful disobedience*.
3. Culminates in *hardened indifference*.

IV. Receive God's word with a chastened seriousness of spirit.

1. *Warnings from God should produce alarm.* "Afraid."
2. *Convictions of sin should lead to repentance.* "Rend garments."
3. *Divine threatenings should urge to seek hiding in Christ.*

Note.—The guilt of indifference. It shows—(*a.*) contempt of God; (*b.*) recklessness of soul; (*c.*) hardness of heart.

Ver. 31. *Theme:* THREATENED PUNISHMENT. "And I will punish him, and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity." A current sentiment that God is too merciful to punish. This shows—

i. *A misconception of the character of God.*

ii. *A wilful ignorance of the facts of history.*

iii. *Forgetfulness of the suffering condition of this present evil world.* For, was not Adam driven from Eden? Did not the deluge sweep the ungodly from the earth? Were not Sodom and Gomorrah overthrown? Has God never sent famine, pestilence, &c., to punish the sins of the people? Has He not so constituted the human mind as that transgression entails misery? No error could be more irrational and unscriptural. Yet it is—

I. Pleaded that punishment is inconsistent with mercy. Because "God is love" and merciful, He cannot and will not punish.

But—1. *Punishment*, instead of being destructive of mercy, *is itself merciful*. To let transgressors go would foster evil and spread ruin.

2. Hence God could *not be merciful* did *He not punish*.

II. Yet no sin in human history has been committed with impunity.

1. Every transgression and disobedience *has received* or *will receive* a just recompense of reward.

2. How then, if sinners must be punished, can they be *pardoned and saved?* Christ "was wounded for *our transgressions*."

3. Had the saved been saved without their sins being borne by their Surety, *law in that case had been ignored*, and *Justice slain on the altar of Mercy*.

III. Since justice and mercy *are alike attributes of God, He can never be other than* both just and merciful.

1. In the *economy of redemption* they exist in friendly alliance.

2. They are never separated either in *the Divine nature or the Divine government*.

IV. In *all* God's judgments on rebellious Israel there were *both justice and mercy*. Justice towards them that fell, mercy towards those spared. "Behold the *goodness* and *severity* of God," &c.

V. However obscured, *still* mercy always tempers justice *in God's administrations*. Difficult to *discern mercy in the deluge;* yet it arrested aboundings of iniquity and acted beneficially on the new world.

In some cases *mercy is more conspicuous than justice*. Yet *Heaven* is not all mercy unmixed with justice: in the *redeemed* we see the *mercy* of God; but in the *Redeemer*, with His scars, we see the *justice*. And *Hell* is not all justice unmixed with mercy: in the suffering there we see the *justice* of God, but in the effect of their doom on others (and other worlds) we may see the *mercy*.

VI. *The conduct of some transgressors leads to* justice being allowed to take its course untempered by mercy. *E.g.*, the fallen angels. So with impenitent

and unbelieving men. Yet while Mercy does not intervene with such, it is merciful to others that such should be punished; as it is merciful now to society to banish great criminals from their midst.

In God's dealings with our fallen world, "*grace reigns, through righteousness,*" in relation to all *who believe;* whereas *justice reigns* in harmony with mercy, in reference to those who "neglect the great salvation."—*Rev. D. Pledge,* "*Walks with Jeremiah.*"

Ver. 32. *Theme:* "ANOTHER ROLL," WITH "ADDED WORDS."

I. God's judgments *against sin.*

II. Man's attempt to *evade* them.

III. How Divine condemnations *reappear.*

IV. How they *reappear with additions.*—*Rev. John Farren.*

ADDENDA TO CHAP. XXXVI.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

REVELATION IN WRITING. "This is the first recorded instance of the formation of a Canonical Book, and of the special purpose of its formation. 'The Book' now, as often afterwards, was to be the *death-blow of* the old regal, aristocratic, sacerdotal *exclusiveness,* as represented in Jehoiakim. The 'Scribe,' now first rising into importance in the form of Baruch, to supply the defects of the living Prophet, was as the printing-press, in far later ages, supplying the defects of both Prophet and Scribe, and handing on the word of truth, which else might irretrievably have perished."—*Stanley,* "*Jewish Church,*" ii. 456.

The British and Foreign Bible Society have during the last fifty years *spread, mainly among English readers,* about fifty million copies of God's Word; and from their press *six copies* are now issued *every minute* of the day (of ten hours), or 3600 daily; and this at a price enabling the poorest to possess a Bible.

And the Scriptures have been circulated now in almost every tongue and dialect under heaven, and are being circulated in every country.

"Within this ample volume lies
The mystery of mysteries:
Happiest they of human race
To whom their God has given grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch and force the way;
And better had they ne'er been born,
That read to doubt, or read to scorn."
—*Scott.*

INFURIATED HEARERS. Vespasian is said to have been *patientissimus veri* (Quintilian), "very patient of truth;" so was the good Josiah. But Jehoiakim "was more like Tiberius, that tiger who tore with his teeth what displeased him; or like Vitellius the tyrant, of whom Tacitus saith "that his ears were of that temper that he could hear no counsel, though never so profitable, unless it were pleasant, and did suit with his humours (Lib. iii. *Hist.*)—*Trapp.*

BURNING BIBLES. See article in "*Secular Annotations on Scripture Texts,*" Second Series, by Francis Jacox, pp. 180–189, on "Baruch's Burnt Book."

Jehoiakim is the first we read of that ever offered to burn the Bible. Antiochus, indeed, did the like afterwards, and Diocletian the tyrant, and later the Pope. A bad confederacy!

Dean Stanley, in his "Jewish Church," vol. ii. pp. 455, 456, says, "Three or four columns exhausted the royal patience. He seized a knife, such as Eastern scribes wear for the sake of erasures, cut the parchment into strips, and threw it into the brazier till it was burnt to ashes. Those who had heard from their fathers of the effect produced on Josiah by the recital of the warnings of Deuteronomy might well be startled at the contrast. None of those well-known signs of astonishment and grief were seen; neither king nor attendants rent their clothes. It was an outrage long remembered. Baruch, in his hiding-places, was overwhelmed (ver. 15) with despair at this failure of his mission. But Jeremiah had now ceased to waver. He bade his timid disciple take up the pen, and record once more the terrible message. . . . *But the Divine Oracle could not be destroyed* in the *destruction of its outward framework.* It was the

new form of the vision of the 'bush burning, but not consumed:' a sacred book, the form in which Divine truths were now first beginning to be known, burnt as sacred books have been burnt again and again, in the persecutions of the fourth or of the sixteenth century, yet multiplied by that very cause; springing from the flames to do their work, living in the voice and life of men, even when their outward letter seemed to be lost."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter. In the tenth and eleventh year of Zedekiah. Later than chap. xxi., for that embassy was sent when Nebuchadnezzar was marching against Jerusalem; this, during the crisis when the Egyptian army came and temporarily drew off Nebuchadnezzar's from the siege (ver. 5). In notes on chap. xxxiv. will be seen the mood of the nation at this moment. But as the interval passed, while the armies of Egypt and Chaldea struggled together outside of the city, Zedekiah was moved to solicit the prophet's intercession with God for his people.

For other notes *cf.* on chaps. xxi. and xxxiv.

2. Literary Criticisms. Ver. 10. "*Wounded men:*" men *thrust through*. Ver. 12. "*To separate himself thence in the midst of his people.*" The Syriac, "To divide thence a share with the people;" Vulgate, "To divide thence a possession in the sight of the citizens;" Targum, "To divide an inheritance he had there with the people;" Septuagint, "To purchase thence." Kimchi, Rosenmüller, Dahler, and others construe the meaning thus: Jeremiah *slipped away*, &c. (as in A.V. margin). But חָלַק, *to be smooth*, in its form here, means to *make smooth* or *divide:* hence Henderson, "that he might *take his portion thence* among the people;" and Naegelsbach, "that he might divide his inheritance."

Ver. 15. "*Into the dungeons and into the cabins.*" Some interpret חֲנִיּוֹת, *curved posts* or stocks; but the word rather describes *arched vaults*. "Dungeon" is lit. *house of a cistern*. Great excavations existed under the palace and temple at Jerusalem, as reservoirs for water.

SECTIONAL DIVISION OF CHAPTER XXXVII.

Vers. 1–10. PRAYERS ASKED, BUT IN VAIN.

i. *A disobedient hearer* (ver. 1), *though warned by sad example* (ver. 2), *asking the prophet's prayers* (ver. 3) *in an hour of distress* (ver. 5).

ii. *A self-willed suppliant* (ver. 7) *answered with a message of judgment* (vers. 7, 8) and *words of solemn admonition* (vers. 9, 10).

Vers. 11–15. A PRUDENT USE OF OPPORTUNITY MALICIOUSLY THWARTED.

i. *A judicious effort.* The prophet's *intention was wise* (ver. 12); the *brief interval was auspicious* (ver. 11). See Lit. Crit. *supra*.

ii. *A false charge. Maliciously made* (ver. 13); *emphatically repudiated* (ver. 14); eagerly believed (ver. 14).

iii. *A foul injustice. Angry antagonists* (ver. 14); *abusive treatment; unwarrantable imprisonment.*

Vers. 16–21. WRONGFUL SUFFERINGS ALLEVIATED.

i. *Royal leniency. Waited for patiently* (ver. 16); exercised more from *personal anxiety* than *righteous regret* (ver. 17).

ii. *Troubled inquiry.* Sought *secretly, eagerly, tremblingly* (ver. 17); answered *emphatically* (ver. 17).

iii. *Righteous expostulation.* Against *personal wrong* (ver. 18); against *heeding delusive teachers* (ver. 19).

iv. *Sufferings ameliorated.* The *pathetic pleadings of distress* (ver. 20); the *royal exercise of compassion* (ver. 21).

HOMILETIC OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XXXVII.

Ver. 3. *Theme:* A BAD MAN ASKING A GOOD MAN'S PRAYERS.

I. *What* led *to this bad man* needing this good man's prayers?

1. *Neglect of the warning of example* (ver. 2). All the woes which came upon Jechoniah and his people afforded Zedekiah no effectual admonition of the miseries which follow disobedience.

2. *Imminent perils were gathering* (ver. 5.) He sought Jeremiah's *counsel* once before (chap. xxi.), when the king of Babylon's army first approached; and now asked his *prayers* when his hopes and fears struggled within him as the Egyptians and Chaldeans warred outside the city's walls. He was in anxiety; and it is then that bad people come for the sympathy and help of the godly.

II. What mood was this bad man in *while asking the good man's prayers?*

1. He *cared not to hear the Lord's messages and commands* (comp. Pharaoh, Exod. viii. 28, 29).

2. He *dared not to intercede the Lord himself* (comp. Exod. x. 16, 17).

3. And *he craved not the Lord Himself* but *only His help.*

III. *What* facts are suggested *by bad men asking a good man's prayers?*

1. It is *urgent for every man* to have *a way open by which to reach God in prayer.* Even bad men, prayerless men, will come to *need* this; and the moment will be *urgent* in their history: in trouble, in death.

2. *Intercessory prayers for others have power with God.* Scripture instances—Moses, Elijah, &c. Even evil persons seem to know this, and cherish the thought, and use the prayers of others in their own extremity. Wicked people, *in alarm,* will ask such prayers.

3. *Prayers in which God Himself is rejected* from the soul, and *merely His help selfishly and sordidly asked,* are an affront to Jehovah. Jeremiah would not carry such prayers before the Throne.

4. *Sinners defeat the prayers of good men* by their own wicked lives. They war against the pleadings of the godly.

5. *Bad men dare not venture before God themselves,* and therefore seek the intercession of the good. *Penitents,* though sinners, have sought God, for in their penitence they cease to be included among *bad* persons: their hearts are in grief for their sin. *There is a Way to God* for even the guilty, and the Way is open always: it is *through Jesus;* for "if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father," and none shall seek His intercession in vain.

See Addenda: USELESS PRAYERS.

Ver. 9. *Theme:* DECEPTIVE HOPE. "*Thus saith the Lord, Deceive not yourselves,*" &c.

I. Delusive helps rise in our despair. They are the *will-o'-wisps* on the swamp decoying the lost traveller into deeper misery.

1. *Misery makes us ready to be deceived.* We hunger then for any faint hope of help. The desert travellers, expiring with thirst, see the *mirage:* it is an illusion of their fevered vision. A shipwrecked crew sight a vessel, but it is the creation of their mad imagination. In *the hour of worldly misfortune* we seize the frailest promise of relief *Sinners dying* in their sins call for the minister, the sacrament—grasp at any help; will take man's lying words, "Peace, peace!" while they are still *unforgiven by God, unreconciled through Christ.*

2. *Delusions come upon all who turn from God.* These Jews trusted and sought help from the Egyptians, and would not heed God's messages through Jeremiah that the Chaldean power should scatter the forces of Pharaoh. No! they turned from God, and trusted in Egypt.

At a crisis when the Chaldean army was besieging the city, the army of Pharaoh came to their succour.

Yes; and *lying comforters will appear to souls who reject God.* The *atheist,* assuring them there is no future, no judgment to come, no penalty for sin. The *sacramentarian* or *sacerdotalist,* with their false theories of the efficacy of the

Church's sacraments, and the priestly functions of confessors and clergymen. The *moralist*, who will urge that, though religion has been neglected, the Spirit "grieved," Christ "passed by," yet "*he can't be wrong whose life is in the right.*"

God sometimes gives disobedient souls over to their delusions, so that they "believe a lie." They resolutely reject Him, and He says to all awakening agencies of grace, "He has turned to idols, let *them alone!*"

II. Deceptive hopes leave us in deeper distress. The darkness is more blinding for the momentary flash of light. The silence is more ghostly for the swiftly-gone voice of pity.

By Pharaoh-Hophra's approach, Nebuchadnezzar's army was temporarily drawn off from the siege of Jerusalem, but ver. 9; see vers. 7, 8.

1. *They bring a temporary delight.* The city went into jubilation at the sight of the Egyptian banners. A man in *mental wretchedness* rushes into exhilarating company and indulgences; and lo! he laughs the laughter of fools. *Conscience smitten with the pangs of conviction* seeks the opiate of a thrilling book, and soul-misery is forgotten in the enchantment of exciting fiction.

Souls *consciously needing a Saviour* attend the routine of Ritualism, and get lulled into something of quietude; or betake themselves to self-righteous efforts, and gather a new pleasure from these adopted reformatory habits.

2. *They fail to fulfil their promises.* The tower of Babel did *not* lift its builders up to heaven! The inflated boastings of Goliath did *not* fulfil the proud hopes of the Philistines. The army of Egypt did *not* effect the deliverance of the city from Nebuchadnezzar's siege.

Then follows a melancholy disillusionising. No misery can exceed that of being, for a brief respite, raised up from the black depths of despair only to be cast down again into profounder deeps.

And "the hope of the hypocrite *shall perish.*" Indeed, every hope which rejects God shall mock the soul with its falsity. In *death* or in eternity. The storm shall beat upon the house reared on sand, and great shall be its fall. Oh, "deceive not *yourselves;*" literally, *your souls.* There is "a *Hope sure and steadfast:*" Christ is our *Hope.*

3. *They defeat not the purposes of God.* Deceptive hopes are powerless to avert facts. It is as if attempting to arrest Omnipotence with a spider's web. God intended Nebuchadnezzar's victory, yet the Jews cherished the hope of Pharaoh's triumph. But God is ruling human events. He has a *will* mightier than our *desires.* "The Chaldeans shall not depart."

a. Nor will the *horrors of death* "depart" from the dying sinner.

b. Nor will the *terrors of judgment* be evaded by those who despise God and reject His grace in Jesus.

c. Nor will the *purposes of God* yield to our schemings, for "He doeth according to His will among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth," and "none shall stay His hand."

d. Nor will the *Divine terms of salvation* be altered for man's caprice, or any other means of securing God's mercy be accepted. For "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

Therefore, "*deceive not yourselves.*"

Ver. 12. *Theme:* SEEKING RETIREMENT. "Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem, to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people." Various interpretations of his reason and purpose—

I. His wearied heart craved quietude amid family scenes. Benjamin was his birthplace. He was *tired with the tumult and antagonism* of the city, for he saw that he spent himself in fruitless labours. So, worn out with weariness, burdened at heart over the refractoriness and hardness of those among whom he had laboured so long and in vain, he sought retirement and rest.

Perhaps, too, he might there find his people *more ready to heed his messages*, and, by repentance, to avert the Divine judgments.

1. Labours abundant justify God's servants in *seeking temporary* repose. "Come ye apart and rest awhile."

2. From scenes of official life the human yearnings turn to the *tenderer associations of home.*

II. In despair of further usefulness in the city, he sought more congenial surroundings. We know how he shrank from the prophet's ministry in Jerusalem (see on chap. xii. 5). His experience there had been very *adverse* and *disappointing.* The luxurious dream of a rural ministry allured him. And now, that evidently his work at Jerusalem had failed, he seized the opportunity for retiring to Anathoth.

1. *Service in forefront scenes* becomes very harassing and exhausting.

2. *Failure in work* naturally impels the worker to ask an altered sphere of ministry.

III. Disasters gathering on the nation impelled him to concern for personal safety. The siege would bring ruin and famine. Now was the favourable moment to quit Jerusalem and hide from the miseries which were imminent.

1. *Family interests claimed his attention.* He was needed in Benjamin for some division of the family inheritance, which the siege rendered desirable (see *Lit. Crit.*)

2. In *times of common trouble* we strongly covet the *surroundings of family affection.*

Ver. 14. *Theme:* FALSE CHARGES. "Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans."

False charges, false witnesses, false words, false pretences, have been so common in this deceitful world, that no marvel David said in his haste, "All men are liars."

But there are lovers of truth in the world, who scorn a lie; disciples of Him who said, "I am the Truth."

I. When wrongly charged it is right to falsify the accusation. To be silent under a false charge is tacitly to admit its truth. All such untruths should be indignantly refuted. In this we have warrant not only from Jeremiah's example, but also in our Lord and His apostles.

But while it is sad to see good men falsely accused—

II. *It is sadder to see men so depraved as to be* guilty of knowingly bringing false accusation. Better be the accused than the false accuser; the slave than the slave-owner.

> "Dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
> Just estimation, prized above all price,
> I had much rather be myself the slave
> And wear the bonds than fasten them on
> him."
>
> —COWPER.

III. Christianity distinguishes its disciples with genuineness and truth. Yet *none have had grosser charges* laid against them. The apostles were charged with *encouraging sin* that grace might abound. The early Christians were charged with *fostering sedition* and "turning the world upside down." The Protestant martyrs were charged with "*heresy.*"

IV. Current errors need to be confronted with the cry, "*It is false!*"

1. *Ecclesiastical theories* of apostolic succession, of baptismal regeneration, of transubstantiation, of the sinner's annihilation, of universal restoration, of the Universal Fatherhood of God—Socinian in its origin and tendency. "To the law and the testimony," and so test Church politics, creeds, rites, and customs.

2. Errors are being disseminated *by the press* which should impel us to "search the Scriptures daily, to see if these things are so." And wherever we meet an unscriptural theory, let us boldly cry, "It is false!"

Time will ensure the triumph of truth. "The greatest friend of truth is Time."—*Condensed and arranged from "Walks with Jeremiah," by Rev. D. Pledge.*

Ver. 15. *Theme:* INJUSTICE TO THE JUST. Though prepared to defend and exculpate himself, he was not allowed to explain or plead.

I. Disqualified judges "were *wroth.*"

1. *Anger* renders men incapable of *judgment.*

2. *Prejudice* proves fatal to administration of *justice.*

3. *Hatred* gives no place to *rectitude* or *humanity.*

II. Unproved accusations.

1. *Malice* cares not to wait for justification.

2. *Wicked men* allow passion to hurry them on to indulge *their wrath.*

3. *Innocence* has no hope of fair treatment from guilty men.

III. Lawless cruelty. "*Smote* him."

1. *Pity for God's servants* is absent from the hearts of those who *hate God.*

2. *Violence,* regardless of righteousness, has often been the cruel lot of the godly.

3. *Indignation against a faithful witness* for God carries men to shameful extremes and criminal brutality. "For the wicked hateth the righteous and gnasheth upon him with his teeth."

IV. Foul imprisonment.

1. It gratified them to *hinder his further witnessing* against their iniquity.

2. In their revenge they added *barbarity to indignity.* "*The dungeon.*"

3. *Weary days* spent in vileness and darkness: "remained there many days."

This was—

1. *A heavy cross* for a consciously innocent man to bear.

2. Only the *comforts of God's Spirit could have sustained him* amid this cruel usage.

3. *How light* are our sufferings for Christ compared with these!

See Addenda: INJUSTICE.

Ver. 17. *Theme:* A SECRET INQUIRER. "The king sent . . . and *asked him secretly in his house,* Is there any word from the Lord?"

I. An inquirer, anxious about a Divine message.

1. *Fearing* lest it should be one of doom.

2. *Curious* to learn, though unwilling to obey, the word of the Lord.

3. *Wishful* that there might come a "word" which would give sanction to his own predetermined course.

II. An inquirer, solicitous for his own dignity

1. *Ashamed to openly show himself* an inquirer.

2. *Contriving a secret interview,* in order to avoid inconvenience.

3. *Devoid* alike of *courage* and of *self-abasement.*

III. An inquirer, touched by a sentiment of tenderness and mercy. The king—

1. *Relieved the prophet from his unjust imprisonment.*

2. *Showed him consideration* in bringing him into his house.

3. Doubtless felt *some compunction* for the wrong done to him, and some *conviction of his own* wrong course of action—this prompting his kindlier conduct.

IV. An inquirer answered by an uncongenial word from God.

1. *Denouncing his false hopes* in Egypt.

2. *Foretelling his personal overthrow.*

Why such a message sent from God to *an inquirer?*

i. Because, though an inquirer, *he was determined upon a disobedient course of action.*

ii. Because, though an inquirer, he was *in no humble and contrite spirit.*

iii. Because, though an inquirer, he was *time-serving and cowardly.*

iv. Because, though an inquirer, *he ought not to have been an inquirer at all;* for he had already *heard enough* from God through Jeremiah, and ought long ago to have ceased asking for "any word" additional, and *obeyed* what God *had already said* to him.

Ver. 19. *Theme:* DELUSIONS REFUTED. "*Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you,* saying, The king of Babylon shall not come," &c.?

Not only had false prophets risen, but both kings and people had shown eagerness to heed their misleading prophecies. (See on xxviii. 14, p. 489; and xxviii. 15, p. 494.)

I. Men covet congenial teachers. "*Your* prophets."

1. A *delusive wish to hear only pleasant* prophesyings.

2. A *rash readiness to hear* only pleasant prophesyings

3. A *fatal proneness to believe* the prophesyings we covet.

II. Time is fatal to falsity. "Where *now?*"

1. *False words* fascinate and gratify *for the moment.*

2. *Gilded hopes* charm *so long as they endure.*

3. *Cherished delusions* have an ominously *brief existence.*

III. Experience supplies the test of truth.

1. Man wants *safe*, rather than mere *pleasant*, teaching.

2. Deceitful words *will, in due time, meet their certain refutation.*

3. *The day of adversity* will shatter all refuges of lies.

IV. God's refutation of false hopes. "The king of Babylon," &c. But—

1. *The derided event* is actually realised. So Satan's lie, "In the day. . . ye shall *not* surely die."

2. *God will see that truth is vindicated* against falsity.

3. Sinners will find that *God's messages*, though reviled, *turn out true.*

V. Beguiled souls deserted by their leaders. "*Where* now are *your prophets?*"

1. They who ruin others will *wish to shun their dupes* in the day of calamity.

2. Baffled prophets *hide from their own shame* in the hour of defeat.

3. *Deceivers*, and those they deceived, *must bear the doom of their delusions.* "All liars shall have their part in the lake," &c., as these wicked prophets had to share the misery of Jerusalem's ruin.

See Addenda: FALSITY.

ADDENDA TO CHAP. XXXVIII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

VALUELESS PRAYERS. Scarcely any ministers, and many a Christian, but can recall instances of their prayers being asked by persons who have been prayerless themselves. One will suffice. I went to see a woman in G——. She was dying, but without a gleam of hope.

"Oh, pray for me; I cannot, cannot pray for myself, sir."

"Indeed; but why not for yourself?"

"My state is too hard; I have known all about religion since childhood, but have insulted my conscience, rejected God, resisted the Spirit, neglected Christ. And oh, I dare not, I *cannot* speak to Heaven now!"

All my pleading failed to awaken hope in her, or to induce her to an effort to pray. It seemed awful. No! She should be thankful if I would pray for her; but she could not even frame in her thoughts a petition; *prayer in her was dead.*

Although I did kneel and earnestly plead for her, yet when I asked her if she had joined in any one of my direct and urgent cries, she answered—

"No, I have no power to bring my mind into any definite desire; *I have killed prayer in my soul;* I can't now speak a thought to God."

"His comrade too arose,
And with the outward forms
Of righteousness and prayer insulted God."

—*Southey.*

"We are told
How much the prayers of righteous men avail,
And yet 'tis strange how very few believe
Those blessed words, or act as were they true.
One reason of this incredulity
May be, that conscience whispers to their souls,
'Not righteous men are ye.' And thus they think
That useless it would be to strive in prayer
For other's good, when scarcely for themselves
They hope for mercy. Lukewarm hearts and faint,
Lift up your feeble hands and bend the knee;
A Mightier than ye your guilt hath borne,
And for His sake, not yours, all prayer is heard."

—*Lady Chatterton.*

INJUSTICE. When Athens was ruled by the thirty tyrants, Socrates the philosopher was summoned to the Senate House and ordered, together with others, to seize one Sevon, a man of rank and fortune, whom they determined to destroy that they might possess his estate. This commission Socrates flatly refused; and boldly replied, "I will never willingly assist in an unjust act."

Cherides sharply replied, "Dost thou think, Socrates, to talk always in this style, and not to suffer?"

"Far from it," he answered, "I expect

to suffer a thousand ills, but none so great as to do unjustly."

"A wise man never goes the people's way;
But as the planets still move contrary
To the world's motion, so doth he to opinion:
He will examine if those accidents
Which common fame calls injuries, happen to him
Deservedly or no? Come they *deservedly?*
They are no wrongs then, but punishments.
If *undeservedly*, and he not guilty?
The doer of them first should blush, not he."
—*Jonson.*

FALSITY. "The essence of a lie is the intention to deceive."

A very capital painter in London exhibited a work of art representing a friar habited in his canonicals. Viewing the painting *at a distance*, you would think the friar to be in a praying attitude, for his hands are clasped together, and held horizontally to his breast; his eyes seem meekly closed like those of the publican in the Gospel; before him lies what looks like a book, over which prayerfully he bends as in devout meditation. But take *a nearer survey*, and the deception vanishes. The book is discovered to be a punch-bowl; in the hands pressed together is a lemon whose juice he is squeezing into the bowl; and the half-closed eyes are for protection from the spurting juice, and not for prayer.

Get nearer liars and their falsity is manifest.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—Chronological Notes as on preceding chapter.

Personal Allusions. Ver. 1. "*Shephatiah,*" never elsewhere mentioned. "*Gedaliah,*" possibly son of "Pashur" the violent (chap. xx. 1–3). "*Jucal,*" called Jehucal (xxxvii. 3) "*Pashur,*" son of Malchiah, same as mentioned xxi. 1.

Ver. 6. "*Malchiah son of Hammelech*" (see on xxxvi. 26).

Ver. 7. "*Ebed-melech the Ethiopian.*" Mutilation to a Hebrew was forbidden by the Mosaic law (Deut. xxiii. 1); and Ethiopians were not infrequently selected for service in the royal harem (Dan. xi. 43).

Literary Criticisms. Ver. 1. "*Words Jeremiah had spoken:*" *was speaking.* Ver. 4. "*For thus he weakeneth:*" *i.e. since* or *because.* Ver. 6. "*Into the dungeon:*" lit. *pit* or *cistern* (see note on xxxvii. 16). "*Sank in the mire:*" so that it was a *muddy pit.* Subterranean cisterns under the houses became miry pits when the water was exhausted from them. Ver. 10. "*Thirty men.*" Ewald, Hitzig, Graf, &c., thinking שְׁלֹשִׁים, "thirty," too many, would read שְׁלִשָּׁה, *three:* but this overlooks the resistance which the king's counsellors might perchance offer. Ver. 11. "*Old cast clouts and old rotten rags:*" from סחב, to *drag, rend;* therefore here, *shreds,* tatters; and next הַמְמֻלָּחִים, from מָלַח, *to rub away;* hence *soft or smooth rags.* Ver. 15. "*Wilt thou not hearken?*" The interrogation point is an error: "*Thou wilt not,*" &c.

Ver. 22. "*Those women shall say, Thy friends,*" &c. This "saying" of the king's women is in the poetic form, making a distich—a jeering refrain—

"Thy friends have urged thee on, and have prevailed with thee:
Thy feet are sunk in the mire; they are turned away back!"

The words, "*they are turned away back,*" refer not to the king's feet, but to the friends who, having lured him on, desert him in his difficulties.

Ver. 28. "*He was there when Jerusalem was taken:*" a confused sentence. Omit the italic word "*there*" from the verse; and read, "And *it* was when Jerusalem was taken;" *i.e.* "*It came to pass when Jerusalem was taken*"—then continue next chapter; for these words should stand at the head of chap. xxxix.

TOPICS OF CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Jeremiah's slanderous enemies (vers. 1–4).
God's prophet, a prisoner (ver. 6).
A gracious and courageous Ethiopian (vers. 7–13).
Jeremiah's experiences typical of Christ's (vers. 1–13).
Obedience (ver. 20).
Sinners the cause of their own sufferings (vers. 17, 18).
Timidity (ver. 19).
Equivocation (ver. 27).

Topic: JEREMIAH'S SLANDEROUS ENEMIES. (Vers. 1–4.)

Jeremiah was no arch-traitor, as these "princes" would imply, but the *truest patriot* in all the land. This he proved by his courage and faithfulness, in repeating counsel which cost him so much malignity and persecution.

Certainly his opponents regarded him as the most dangerous man among the people, because *he thwarted their counsels and designs;* just as Ahab accused Elijah of troubling Israel (1 Kings xviii. 18); Azariah, Amos (Amos vii. 10); and the Jews, Paul (Acts xvi. 20).

I. Calumny and slander assail even the best of men. "The worthiest people are frequently attacked by slander, as we usually find it to be the best fruit which birds peck at."—*Bacon.*

"The world with calumny abounds,
The whitest virtue slander wounds;
There are whose joy is, night and day,
To take a character away.
Eager from rout to rout they haste
To blast the generous and the chaste;
And, hunting reputation down,
Proclaim their triumph through the town."—*Pope.*

"Soft buzzing slander: silky moths, that eat
An honest name."—*Thomson.*

"The tongue of the slanderer is a devouring fire, which tarnishes whatever it touches; which exercises its fury on the good grain, equally as on the chaff; on the sacred as on the profane; which, wherever it pleases, leaves only desolation and ruin; turns into vile ashes what only a moment before had appeared to us so precious and brilliant; acts with more violence than ever in the time when it was apparently almost smothered up and extinct; which blackens when it cannot consume, and sometimes sparkles and delights before it destroys."—*Massillon.*

"Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes."—*Shakespeare.*

II. *Calumny and slander* base their attacks upon misrendered truths. Jeremiah's words were quoted as if proving him unpatriotic; whereas his full words are earnest with *love and solicitude for his people* (comp. xxi. 8, 9).

"You cannot always take up a slander and detect the falsehood there; you cannot evaporate the truth in the slow process of the crucible, and then show the residuum of falsehood glittering and visible; you cannot fasten upon any word or sentence and say that it is calumny; for in order to constitute slander it is not necessary that the word spoken should be false—half truths are often more calumnious than whole falsehoods."—*F. W. Robertson.*

An old writer has said that we have two eyes and two ears, but only one tongue, that we may see and hear twice as much as we say; but unhappily men generally act the reverse; for, alas! they say far more than they see or hear.

"Mingling truth with falsehood, sneers with smiles,
A thread of candour with a web of wiles."—*Byron.*

III. Calumny and slander inflict the most piteous wrongs (see ver. 6). Against slander there is no defence. It stabs with a smile. It is the poisoned arrow whose wound is incurable.

"Good name, in man and woman,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.
Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that, which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."—*Shakespeare.*

Note—

"Slander meets no regard from noble minds;
Only the base believe what the base only utter."—*Bellew.*

Topic: GOD'S PROPHET A PRISONER. "Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire" (Jer. xxxviii. 6).

A prophet in prison! An ambassador of the Most High God in bonds! Let us trace the history of this great crime against the Majesty of Heaven.

Jeremiah's prison experiences began twenty years before the taking of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon. "Pashur, who was governor of the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks," &c. (xx. 1). And what things had Jeremiah prophesied? Only those which the Lord commanded him, saying, "Diminish not a word." He had denounced the innumerable abominations which prevailed in the land, the oppressions which one class practised upon another, and the gross idolatries, with all their attendant cruelties and sensualities; had foretold the Divine judgments that were hastening to overwhelm the nation, and from which there was now no escape.

When Nineveh was threatened with destruction by the stranger prophet, it repented and humbled itself in sackcloth and ashes. But Jerusalem hardened itself against the Divine voice, and the chief governor of its Temple seized the prophet who had dared to foretell its doom, and "*smote him.*"

I. It was the governor of the Lord's house that did this great wrong.

1. It was the chief priests of the Lord's house that led the conspiracy *against the Master of prophets and apostles six hundred years later*, and one of their officers rudely struck the Divine captive with the palm of his hand. Jesus repelled the wrong with calm dignity, saying, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?" But Jeremiah did not bear his trial with the calmness and meekness which adorned the Master; for he addressed severe words to his persecutor: "Thou Pashur . . . shall go into captivity," &c. (xx. 6). But having delivered his message, he breaks out into complaints which have no parallel in the history of the good men of the Bible, except of Job in the hour of bitter despair. "Cursed be the day in which I was born," &c. (xx. 14–18). All this after his deliverance, and after saying, "Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord; for He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil-doers."

Many a servant of God has put the ancient prophet to shame. "I found the comforts of my God in the Fleet prison exceedingly, it being the first time of my being a prisoner," wrote a persecuted Englishman two centuries ago. Nor did the strength of this good man depart from him when he stood in the pillory and had his ears cut off by the hangman. "All the while I stood in the pillory I thought myself to be in heaven, and in a state of glory and triumph, if any such state can be on earth. I found these words of Peter verified on me in the pillory: 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you, which on their part is blasphemed, but on yours glorified.'" *Henry Burton* is more of a prophet in the pillory than Jeremiah, and one wonders at the Hebrew saint that he should sink into such a slough of despond.

We must find the secret of it very much in his natural temperament. His was a task which required the firmness of a rock and the boldness of a lion—characters which were certainly not constitutional with Jeremiah. But the Lord knew his frame, and did not err in choosing him for His instrument: "I am with thee to deliver thee," was His promise. And the vicissitudes of the prophet's spirit are to us a precious legacy of instruction and comfort.

On his release his warfare against the sins of the nation was continued as heretofore (xx. 11, 12). In prolonged strains of Divine severity, mingled with promises of a return from Babylon, whither they were doomed to be carried into exile, and with promises of still greater blessing at a more distant period, under the reign of the Messiah, Jeremiah continued his expostulations with a degenerate people, but amid intense suffering to his own tender spirit—"Mine heart within me is broken; all my bones shake," &c. (xxxiii. 9).

2. Later on we find *the spiritual and the secular powers playing the parts* which they have often played in other ages and countries, the *one persecuting* the prophet, the *other protecting* him; the spiritual demanding his death, the secular, with more regard to justice, covering him with the shield of his protection. The priests and prophets, and all the people, took him and said, "Thou shalt surely die." . . . Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and prophets, "This man is not worthy to die; for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord" (xxvi. 7–16).

The secular ruler Pilate was more righteous than the spiritual rulers Annas and Caiaphas. "Behold I bring Him forth unto you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him." But in this case the people took part with unrighteous priests, and demanded that the innocent One should be crucified. In the case of Jeremiah, the people at first joined his persecutors in demanding that he should die. But the appeal to their reason and conscience won them to the side of justice, and they joined the princes in saving the Lord's servant out of the hands of his enemies.

The king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem about fifteen years after the first imprisonment of Jeremiah, and the prophet was instructed to say, "Though ye fight with the Chaldeans ye shall not prosper" (xxxii. 5). The king was now the persecutor: "Wherefore dost thou prophesy," said Zedekiah, "and say, Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon?" (xxxii. 2). It was the old story. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" said the wicked Ahab to the prophet Elijah. "I trouble not Israel," was the memorable reply; "but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." Not the prophet, but the king, and such as the king, was the cause of the dark cloud which now hung over the favoured city.

II. *The prison walls within which Jeremiah was shut up* **could not exclude the presence and the voice of the Lord.**

In his solitude he received assurances not only of the inevitable catastrophe which should overwhelm the land, but of a certain recovery and restoration (xxxii. 26, 42), a message which Jeremiah found means of addressing to the king and to the people. How and when he was released does not appear, but we find him soon again sent back to his place of confinement. The Chaldeans retire from the siege of the city for a time for fear of the Egyptian army, and Jeremiah tries to slip away into the land of Benjamin. He is caught in the gate in the act of departure, and charged with falling away to the Chaldeans. In vain he denies the charge; he must return to prison, and there he remains many days (xxxvii. 16).

The king, whose secret conscience assures him not only of Jeremiah's innocence, but of the gravity of the message with which he is charged of God, sends for him and asks in private, "Is there any word from the Lord?" The prophet answers promptly, "There is; for thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon."

Royal menace and royal clemency are alike impotent to sway the prophet from the faithful discharge of his duty. But fain would he be saved from returning to his prison-house. And one's heart is moved by the earnestness with which he remonstrated with the king (xxxvii. 20). The king was so far moved that he ordered that Jeremiah should be committed not to the dungeon in Jonathan's house, but to the court of the prison, and that a piece of bread should be supplied to him daily. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison (xxxvii. 21).

But the hostility of his enemies was not satisfied. The princes appealed to the king (xxxviii. 4). The sovereign of Judah was weak as well as wicked, and rehearsed the part of Herod, in relation to John the Baptist, centuries before Herod's time. "Behold he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you." Then they took him, and not having courage to murder him outright, they put him into a dungeon where it was not possible that he should live long (xxxviii. 6). But his faith did not fail him. Reciting his experiences afterwards, he said, "I called upon the Lord out of the low dungeon. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee: Thou saidst, Fear not" (Lam. iii. 55–57.) This blessed "Fear not"—how often has the Voice from the excellent glory said to the hearts of sufferers and mourners, "Fear not"! "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will help thee."

The heart of an Ethiopian is moved by the pitiful condition in which wicked men have left the prophet, and he goes into the king's presence and represents the wrong that has been done and the danger in which the prophet is. The king grants the Ethiopian's request, and says, "Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he die" (xxxviii. 10). What a place that dungeon must have been! A deep pit, used as a cistern, perhaps, during part of the year, but now dry, and with a quantity of mud at the bottom, into which the prophet was so sunk that it required not only the strength but the skill of the thirty men to drag him up!

Jeremiah, thus rescued from a cruel death, was not set at liberty, but remained in the court of the prison until the city was taken by the army of Babylon.

III. The Lord's blessing was on the head of his deliverer, Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian.

1. While Jeremiah was yet in prison *there came a message from heaven to him*, saying, "Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, and say unto him" (xxxix. 15-18).

The Ethiopian's skin was not changed in the land of his bondage, but his heart was. He found light shining in this deep night of Judaism, and was guided by it to the everlasting and ever-loving God. And while the children of the kingdom cast themselves out, this child of darkness and of the desert was brought in to share the inheritance of the faithful. *He* "trusted" in the Lord.

2. The message of God to the Ethiopian *rebukes the vain philosophy of man*, and is fraught with comfort to the obscure and despised of mankind. God is too great to concern Himself with the affairs of individuals! He may hold in His right hand the mighty suns of the great universe He has made, but what to Him are the twinkling lights of cottage homes? He may rule kings and princes, but what to Him are slaves and beggars? The philosophy which is capable of being popularised into such questions as these must be *vain*. Mungo Park, faint and perishing, observes a single tuft of grass in the waste African desert, when he thought there was nothing left for him but to die, and his heart argued with the rapidity of lightning, that the Creator of that tuft of grass could not be unobservant of him, His child; and strengthened by the thought he persevered and was saved. And now Jehovah singled out an Ethiopian in the court of Zedekiah, and sent to him a message of His divine and fatherly love. To God the small and the great are alike (Isa. xl. 26, 29). If He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them by their names, He likewise gathereth together the outcasts of Israel; He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds (Ps. cxlvii. 3, 4).

IV. Jeremiah's after ministry.

Jeremiah was still in prison when the armies of Babylon took Jerusalem. He was found in chains and carried with other captives on the way to Babylon, but was released at Ramah, six miles from Jerusalem. Thus ended the prison life of Jeremiah, but not his ministry.

1. *How long the prophet was in prison* it is difficult to determine—probably

for years. His first imprisonment so stunned him as for the moment to overthrow faith and patience. But his later experience was more worthy of the man of God, and his grief was far less for himself than for the people whose day of grace was coming to an end. The words (viii. 21 to ix. 1) may have been written in prison, if not, they were recalled there and oft recited by the bleeding heart of the sorrowing prophet. The matter of the Lamentations which he wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem must have been his frequent meditation in the house of his prison.

2. *He was permitted even in his prison to exercise his ministry.* The word of the Lord was not bound. It came to him and went from him. Prison bars and fetters could not separate him from his God, and happily it did not separate him even from his people. Their conscience and their fears together made them listen to the words which were given to him from God to speak to them.

It may be likewise that his imprisonment was cheered, for some time at least, by the companionship of his faithful friend and amanuensis, Baruch. Tradition says that Baruch was his fellow-prisoner when the prison door was opened by the victorious arms of Babylon. The apostle Paul was comforted in his prison by the coming of Titus. Baruch must have been as an angel of God to Jeremiah in his solitude. Often would they commune together of the hour drawing nearer every day, when sword and famine and pestilence should fill the streets and homes of Jerusalem with horrors unutterable, and the thought of it was more than these prisoners could bear. But their darkness was not unmingled. There was light beyond.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord," &c. (xxiii. 5–8, and xxxiii. 14, 15).

The prophet and his fellow-prisoner could not understand these promises so clearly and fully as we do now. But they saw enough in them to lighten their burden and cheer their spirits. Through present gloom the eye of faith penetrated into a glorious future.

3. Jeremiah must likewise have *written some portion of his prophecies within prison walls.* The thirty-second, thirty-third, and thirty-fourth chapters were doubtless written there, perhaps much besides—perhaps by the hand of the skilful and faithful penman, Baruch.

Again are we reminded of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Four, at least, of the epistles which bear his name were written in his Roman prison. And many books, which the world would not willingly let die, have been written in like circumstances.

Who that has read the "Pilgrim's Progress" can forget its opening sentence?—"As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept I dreamed a dream." The *den* wherein John Bunyan dreamed his immortal dream was Bedford Jail, which was the good man's home for twelve years. With his Bible and Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" as his constant companions, he wrote his allegory, not witting nor dreaming of its wonderful history in ages after his death. As the composition advanced he read it, part by part, to his fellow-prisoners, to their no small amusement as well as instruction. But so doubtful was he of the value of his prison-work, and so various were the counsels which he received on the subject of its publication, that he did not put it into the printer's hands for some years after his liberation. To-day it is read in more languages of the earth, probably, than any other book, except the Word of God.

Jeremiah is *the first prison author* that we know of. The last has not yet written. For the conflict foretold when sin entered the world is not yet ended: "I will put enmity between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." And so long as this enmity lasts, and the conflict between good and evil is waged on earth, we shall find battles fought and prisons built and stakes erected.

Be it so. The words of Christ cannot be broken, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Let them call upon their God out of their low dungeon, as did the Jewish prophet, and the Divine voice which cheered his prison will cheer theirs. "Fear not." It is enough. It is enough. God says it. Martyrs, rejoice!—your God is with you. If your night be long, He will not forsake you. If it end in the flames of a cruel death, these flames will be as Elijah's chariot to carry you from earth to heaven.—*Rev. John Kennedy, D.D., London: From "Christian World Pulpit,"* 1872.

Topic: A GRACIOUS AND COURAGEOUS ETHIOPIAN. (Vers. 7–13.)

All the king's counsellors were hostile to God's prophet; "his foes were they of his own household." Ebed-melech the Ethiopian was a stranger, an alien; yet he befriended this servant of Jehovah. So with the misused Jewish traveller: the Levite and priest passed him by in his wounded and perishing state, but the Samaritan pitied and helped him. Consider—

I. The graciousness of his spirit. He was—

1. *Deeply affected by the miseries of God's servant* (ver. 7). To hear of what was done troubled him. He had "a heart at leisure for itself to soothe and sympathise."

2. *Impelled by pity to attempt his help* (ver. 8). Not passive sympathy only; he set himself to aid his deliverance. "A little help is worth a deal of pity."

3. *Saw the wickedness of the cruelty shown to Jeremiah* (ver. 9). The inhumanity was shocking to his kind nature; but the *sin* of it was equally evident, for abuse of God's messenger was defiance of God!

4. *Dealt very tenderly with him in rescuing him* (ver. 12). His gentleness is touching. He realised how sick and weak the prophet must be through the horrors of his imprisonment, and from being deprived of food. A tender heart makes the hand gentle.

II. The courage of his conduct.

1. He was *alone in this act of pity*. Others may have felt pity, but feared to show it; he had the courage to avow his commiseration and sympathy with Jeremiah

2. By his practical sympathy *he openly condemned the cruelty and guiltiness of the king's courtiers*. Thus braving their malevolence.

3. *Fearless of all consequences, he even presses his appeal upon the king.* Even as Esther: "So will I go in unto the king; and if I perish, I perish."

4. *He bravely denounces the king's own counsellors.* Thus carrying judgment against "*those men*" (mark its vehement scorn) into the king's *presence;* and thereby implying that the king was himself wrong in having such men about him, and in conniving at their conduct.

5. *He honoured Jeremiah as being the prophet of Jehovah.* Others ridiculed Jeremiah, refused to own him God's messenger; but Ebed-melech calls him "the prophet" (ver. 9), and then insinuates the impiety of all, king and people, for disregarding his messages.

III. The success of his intervention (ver. 10). This is remarkable; for the king had only just before owned himself *afraid to act* against his "princes," and *helpless* to check them (ver. 5). How explain the king's compliance?

1. *The right conduct of one man will start right convictions in another.* Zedekiah could not look at this brave Ethiopian, so courageously and fearlessly and touchingly pleading for the prophet, without feeling condemned for his own supineness and cowardice; and impelled to better purposes. Even a *lowly man*, acting in fear of God, may awaken the conscience and move the heart of *a king!* This encourages the humblest to a fearless piety: it must work good results.

2. *Courageous conduct should be regulated by prudence.* Armed with "thirty men," he arranged for Jeremiah's rescue. The king saw he would need such a band of helpers. But he knew himself that if Jeremiah was to be drawn up alive, the work must be done tenderly; so he provided himself with "old cast clouts," which would be needed to prevent injury to the prophet, for the force needed to draw him up out of the mire would be great.

3. *Befriending care followed his act of rescue* (ver. 13). For only there would the prophet *be safe* from the fury of the princes; and, providentially, he was there *within reach of the king*, to give him counsel (ver. 14).

Here, then, is—

i. *Encouragement to good men to appear in a good cause* and act vigorously for God, notwithstanding they are alone and menaced by dangers and difficulties.

ii. *Noble deeds done by despised Ethiopians find record in God's book*, to assure us that He honours whosoever fears Him. So it is recorded of *Joseph of Arimathea*, that he went in boldly to Pilate to beg the body of Jesus.

iii. Though the Ethiopian cannot "change his skin," *his heart can be changed.* This man showed himself to be a true child of God. Such an instance as that of the Candacian eunuch predicts the future when "Ethiopia shall lift up her hands unto God."

See homily on chap. xxxix. 15–18: "A Lonely Hero of Faith."

Topic: Jeremiah's Experiences Typical of Christ's.

i. *Charged with political treachery.* Jeremiah (vers. 1–4); Jesus (Luke xxiii. 1–5).

ii. *Abandoned by the chief magistrate of the nation to his malignant foes.* Jeremiah by the king (ver. 5); Jesus by Pilate (Luke xxiii. 24).

iii. *The awful profounds of his sufferings suggestive of Christ's.* Jeremiah (ver. 6, "pit," &c.); Christ's (Ps. lxix. 2, 15). Jeremiah "*sank in the mire*," up to the neck, says Josephus, and so, "I *sink in the mire*" (Ps. lxix. 2).

iv. *Though rejected and maltreated by his own nation*, yet *cherished by a Gentile alien.* So Christ was believed in by Gentiles while Israel despised Him, and Ethiopians were among the earliest converts (Acts ii. 10, 41; viii. 27–39).

v. *In Jeremiah's being raised up alive from the pit*, we have *Christ's resurrection from the dead* prefigured and portrayed.

vi. *The Ethiopian's plea to rescue Jeremiah reminds us of a like act by Joseph of Arimathea* (see vers, 8, 9, and comp. Luke xxiii. 52).

Note.—It is remarked by Ambrose, "Jeremiah was cast into the pit; and no one was found among the Jews to draw him out of the deep dungeon. But Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian convert, he did it. Here is a beautiful figure. The Prophetic Word was cast by the Jews into the mire; but we of the Gentiles, who were formerly darkened, like Ethiopians, with stains of sin (comp. Jer. xiii. 23), and were unfruitful, have raised up that Word out of the mire. As it is said by the psalmist, 'Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God' (Ps. lxviii. 31)."

Topic: Obedience. "*Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, when I speak unto thee: so it shall be well with thee, and thy soul shall live*" (ver. 20).

I. Safety lies in obedience to the Divine Will. There is scarcely a loss sustained by an intelligent creature, but may be traced to disobedience to the Divine Will. Angels' loss of heaven. Adam's loss of Eden. Israelites who lost their lives in the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan. Jews' loss of their country in captivity. Ananias and Sapphira who lost life. The captain who lost his ship through not heeding Paul. Equally it is through disobeying the Divine Will that health is lost, reputation is lost, the soul is lost.

II. Causes actuating to disobedience of the Divine Will.

1. *The first cause of the first act of disobedience* is an insoluble mystery. God alone understands the origin of sin. It is a mystery unfathomable that holy and intelligent creatures, as "the angels that sinned," should, *without being tempted*, fall into temptation.

2. The second act of disobedience, that of our first parents, is less mysterious: the *tempter, by lies and insinuations*, allured them to disobedience. Fallen angels had no tempter; fallen men had.

3. Since the fall of angels and of our first parents two causes have operated *leading to universal disobedience—Satanic agency* and *man's depravity*. Hence the mystery of sin lessens as we discover the causes leading thereto. Yet these causes do not justify acts of disobedience.

III. Love is the one moving, prompting cause of all obedience.

Love prompts the *angels* to fulfil the Divine behests: "They do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word."

Love prompts "the *spirits of the just* made perfect;" they are "ministers of His, to do His pleasure."

Love prompted the *Apostles* to obey the Divine commission, "Go ye into all the world;" "The love of Christ constraineth us."

Love prompted the *martyrs* to be "faithful unto death."

Of all forces there is none so great as the *power of love*. *Law*, with all its penalties; *judgments*, with all their terror; *morality*, with all its advantages; are feeble impulses to obedience compared with love. "Love is strong as death."

IV. Consider the pleasures of obedience to the Divine Will.

1. There is a *present* pleasure arising from the *testimony and approbation of conscience*.

2. A *reflective* pleasure arising from the consciousness of having obeyed the Divine Voice. Paul felt this, on review of life, when he said, "I have fought a good fight," &c. This was Christ's pleasure: "I have glorified Thee on the earth," &c.

3. An *anticipatory* pleasure; looking for the Divine approval—"Well done, good and faithful servant," &c.

And as there is a threefold pleasure in obedience, so there is a *threefold pain in disobedience*—

1. *Present:* the pain of an accusing conscience. 2. *Reflective:* the memory of wasted life. 3. *Anticipatory:* dreading hearing the words, "I never knew you; depart from Me," &c.

V. The importance of obedience of the Divine Will. "It shall be well unto thee."

Let the *sinner obey the voice of Jesus*, and "it shall be well unto him;" not die, but live.

Let the *believer* obey the voice of his Lord and Master, and he shall enjoy Divine favour and live and reign with Him for ever.

"Not every one that *saith* unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of My Father which is in heaven."

Yet *obedience will not save the soul*. Obedience is no ground of merit nor basis of hope. It avails nothing for a sinner's justification; and yet, without obedience, the soul will be cast away. Obedience is the sign of faith and manifestation of love.

Topic: SINNERS THE CAUSE OF THEIR OWN SUFFERING. "If thou *wilt not* go forth . . . thou shalt *not escape* out of their hands" (vers. 17, 18; comp. xxxix. 7: "*Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes*").

Zedekiah illustrates the non-acceptance of chastisements. We may attribute his sufferings (chap. xxxix. 7) to Nebuchadnezzar's cruelty. But they came from

something underlying that. Nebuchadnezzar was not cruel to Zedekiah till Zedekiah had been *cruel to himself*. He brought it upon himself, compelled God to be thus severe to him. He would not accept the less severe chastisement God had prepared (ver. 17). God proves too strong for rebellious man.

The *sure consequence of non-acceptance of chastisements is increased sorrow.*

I. Chastisements announced (vers. 17, 18). Here consider—

1. *The proper course of action* when chastisement or discipline is announced. God is speaking from the midst of clouds and darkness; go into the secret place and see God Himself. It is His will that we should see Him; see that there is One who works behind the chances and changes of life. The first thing is to believe God is in it; not to lose time in groping about for Him in the darkness.

2. *A common mistake as to the designs of sorrow and joy:* that *joy* is intended to draw us to God; *sorrow* the reverse. This is our error.

3. *The co-existence of trouble and alleviation.* Along with chastisement God promises circumstances of gracious dealing (ver. 17). We think of the trouble only, and ask its removal, ignoring the alleviation which God places side by side with it.

What are the speakings to us of the word "*Moreover*" (xxxix. 7)?

(1.) Bounded chastisements are not to be rejected.

(2.) God's omnipotence is to be realised.

(3.) The sad effects of the rejection of God's chastisements on memory—nothing left to Zedekiah but bitter reflections.

(4.) Chastisements are always the lightest possible under the circumstances.

(5.) God's terrible reverses of chastisements (chap. xlii. 6).

(6.) God's care of His people under chastisements—He remembers mercy.

(7.) The "moreover" of what might have been; and some of the mercies which are bestowed.

(8.) The need of keeping ourselves within the line of God's action (2 Sam. xxiv. 14). We may pass from the bounded line of God's action to the unbounded line of man's! This is to go we know not whither.

(9.) We may always go into troubles with the certainty of alleviation. Try and find how many lighteners to our trials are vouchsafed. God will never crush a man except so far as he makes it downright necessary that he should be crushed.

II. Chastisements rejected. Not because he wished daringly to defy God; but because of personal humiliation and suffering (ver. 19). How powerful this motive was is evident from his overcoming such tremendous considerations as those of ver. 18!

1. When *God is appointing* chastisement and *we accept* it, we may be *sure it is bounded.* As with Job—"Only not upon himself;" "only save his life."

2. *Enter trouble with the consciousness of limitation.* He who refuses God's cross makes a heavier one for himself (vers. 21, 22).

3. *God's grace in meeting our fears with assurances.* "They shall not deliver thee" (ver. 20). "Obey the voice of the Lord, and it shall be well with thee," &c. (ver. 20).

III. Chastisements inflicted with increase (xxxix. 7). A terrible "moreover" is this! Sightless henceforth; yet what a scene the last he witnessed! Zedekiah refused to put himself into the hands of God; and now he "fell into the hands of man." It counsels—

1. *Immediately* chastisements come, *go to God.* Thus, all the affliction needed to reduce to obedience and to attention to God's voice will not be inflicted.

2. Be *not too curious in examining a discipline.* The good effects will be revealed *after* endurance.

3. By a too close inspection of our troubles and *brooding over them, God will recede from our view;* the affliction will also assume an exaggerated importance.

4. Beware lest a dark dispensation *so overwhelm you as to prevent your appreciating the alleviations.*

5. In all our trial let us consider not only what has been, but *what is left.* God would have left Zedekiah a great deal if he had yielded. God is great in healing as well as in inflicting wounds.

Heaven-made crosses are lighter than earth-made ones. The troubles which He sends will always be less than what you bring.—*Constructed and condensed from "Breviates," by Rev. P. B. Power, M.A.*

Topic: RENEWAL OF OPPORTUNITY WITH ITS ALTERNATIVE ISSUES.

See on Section 1–7, chap. xxxiv. p. 558.

Topic: TIMIDITY. *"I am afraid"* (ver. 19).

A craven king! Pitiable. His case explained thus: he knew his duty, but disliked it; so was continually "halting between two opinions;" wishing to know God's messages, yet reluctant to obey them. His mind was harassed with divided attention; he was afraid of men, yet also troubled with a dread of God. It is thus that "conscience doth make cowards" of compromising and craven souls.

I. *Fear of men creates* instability of character and conduct. Zedekiah knew he did well to ask counsel of Jeremiah (ver. 14), yet feared to follow it (ver. 19). Such timidity—

1. Paralyses the will; 2. Fosters duplicity; 3. Confuses the clear voice of conscience; 4. Enfeebles the power with which God's word should sway the life.

"Fear is the tax that conscience pays to guilt."—*Sewell.*

II. *Fear of men* degrades the noblest nature into servility. Here was a *monarch* reduced to a miserable schemer, afraid to have his subjects know what he did! Its natural fruits are—

1. Secret transactions (ver. 14); 2. Cringing cowardice (ver. 24); 3. Lying subterfuges (vers. 25, 26).

"Cowards die many times before their deaths,
The valiant never taste of death but once."—*Shakespeare.*

III. *Fear of men entails* inevitable derision and disaster. All Zedekiah's scheming to keep out of difficulties—the difficulties of honesty and piety—would only lead to ills far more serious.

1. The scorn of observers. "The *Jews* will *mock me*" (ver. 19), and "*the women*" will make me their *jeering song* (ver. 22). 2. Desertion by false friends (ver. 22, "They are turned away back"). 3. Dire judgments from God (ver. 23).

IV. *Fear of men* alienates God's protection and favour. His selfish plottings left him miserable alternatives. His *life* would be spared if he took one course (ver. 17), although it would be spared only for suffering and degradation at the hands of his conqueror; whereas the other course would entail utter ruin (ver. 18). To this dilemma had all his contrivances reduced him. And all our schemings in which we entrench ourselves will end fatally. Honest obedience of God, regardless of consequences and of human threatenings, will ensure us the Divine overshadowing; but this impiety and timidity will—

1. Leave us friendless in our extremity; and 2. Deprive us of all Divine hiding and succour when enemies prevail.

"Fear or *guilt* attends the *deeds of darkness:*
The virtuous breast ne'er knows it."—*Havard.*

Hence—(*a.*) *Obey God's voice;* for in His favour is life. "It shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live" (ver. 20).

(*b.*) *Trust not in friends* whose attachment can be preserved only by disobeying Divine counsels (ver. 19).

(*c.*) *Shun duplicity;* it degrades to contemptible insincerity (ver. 25). "The fear of man worketh a snare."

(*d.*) *Righteousness makes courageous.* For in God's friendship the soul becomes confident. "The righteous is bold as a lion."

Topic: EQUIVOCATION. "So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived" (ver. 27).

The plain meaning of such words is that Jeremiah hoodwinked them. He did not lie to them certainly; but he did not tell the full truth, and left them with a false impression. It comes very near to deception; it *was* evasion, and certainly was not an honest act. It seems *an oblique lie.*

I. **By what prudential considerations has this act of equivocation been extenuated?** Let us hear the pleas of his defenders.

1. "It does *not appear* that he said *what was untrue.*"—*Bishop Wordsworth.*

2. "No one is bound to *reveal all he knows*—to enemies who seek his life."—*Bishop Wordsworth.*

3. This reservation of part of the truth "was *necessary to prevent an open rupture between the king and his generals.*"—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

4. He did not tell them "what they wanted to know" because "he *was ordered to be silent* by one to whom obedience was due."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

5. "The princes were *not questioning him in due course of law,* but by a power which they had usurped."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

6. "Had the issue only concerned the prophet himself, it might have been his duty to have spoken the whole truth; but *the princes had no right to question him as to the king's conduct.*"—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

Put these six pleas into common English, and they mean—

(*a.*) *Suppression of part of the truth is not a falsehood.* But, on the contrary, it most frequently is; for a half-truth is often the worst of lies.

(*b.*) *Discretion should teach us to save our own skin rather than be frank and fearless!* But this is contemptible cowardice, and is opposed to our Lord's words: "He that *will save* his life shall lose it."

(*c.*) *Preserve good feeling between men,* even *though prevarication be the only way* to effect it! But what had Jeremiah to do with "preventing a rupture," &c.? If peace is thus to be purchased at any price, then farewell to honesty and honour.

(*d.*) *Obey a king's command* even when his order is contrary to strict truthfulness! But who is a king, forsooth, that he should regulate conduct in matters of conscience? We should "obey God rather than man."

(*e.*) *Throw dust in the eyes of enemies.* Well, if "all *is* fair in love and war," this may pass; but craftiness is *not* placed among the Christian virtues.

(*f.*) *It is right to do for another what would be wrong if done for yourself.* But no! wrong can never be made right. If Jeremiah suppressed the truth for the king's sake, it was as much a piece of deception as if he had done it for himself.

II. **On what sacred principles should this act of equivocation be condemned?**

1. *Fear of consequences should not sway conscience* from its fidelity. "Be just, and fear not." But fear now drove Jeremiah to equivocate (comp. Gen. xx. 2).

2. *Guileless speech should distinguish the godly character* (Ps. xxxiv. 13). Christians should be "children of *light,*" "*sincere* and without offence."

3. *Honesty in God's messengers is imperative.* A witness for Jehovah should certainly not accommodate himself to the convenience of a godless potentate.

4. *Truth suffers in the hands of compromising men.* It brings discredit upon truth in general, if professedly holy men are discovered to tamper with it by equivocation. Souls in whom God's Light shines should never emit dim rays.

5. *Our Saviour's example* was ever on the side of *outspoken honesty even before*

adversaries. "If I have spoken evil, bear witness," &c.; "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."

6. *Life is safe in God's keeping*, therefore we should *never dissimulate for the sake of our own safety* (1 Peter ii. 21–23).

> "The man of pure and simple heart
> Through life disdains a double part;
> He never needs the screen of lies
> His inward bosom to disguise."—*Gay.*

> "His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;
> His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate;
> His tears, pure messengers sent from his heart;
> His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth."—*Shakespeare.*

> "Honesty, even by itself, though making many adversaries
> Whom prudence might have set aside, or charity have softened,
> Evermore will prosper at the last, and gain a man great honour.
> Yet there are others that will truckle to a lie, selling honesty for interest.
> And do they gain! They gain but loss; a little cash, with scorn.
> Behold! sorrowful change wrought upon a fallen nature:
> He hath lost his own esteem and other men's respect.
> For the buoyancy of upright faith, he is clothed in the heaviness of cringing;
> For plain truth, where none could err, he hath chosen tortuous paths;
> In lieu of his majesty of countenance, the timorous glances of servility;
> Instead of Freedom's honest pride, the spirit of a slave."—*Tupper.*

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—**1. Chronology of the Chapter.**—*Cf.* notes *in loc.* chap. xxxiv. The siege lasted just one year and six months, not reckoning the interval during which the Chaldeans broke up to give battle to the army of Pharaoh.

2. Contemporary Scriptures.—Ezek. xii. 8–20, xvii. 11–21; 2 Kings xxv. 1–12; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 11–21; Jeremiah lii. 4–11.

3. National Affairs.—*Vide* below on "*The thread of Events.*"

4. Personal Allusions.—Vers. 3 and 13. A critical examination of Hitzig and others, into these compound names, tends to reduce them to *three* (instead of, as in ver. 3, *six*), thus: (1). *Nergal-Sharezer, the Samgar*, or cup-bearer; (2). *Nebo-Sarsechim, the Rab-saris*, or chief of the eunuchs, or chamberlain; (3). A second *Nergal-Sharezer, the Rab-mag*, or chief of the magi. The LXX. read Ναβουσαχαρ, as a name linking together the terminal "Nebo" and "Sarsechim;" while other Greek manuscripts read Ναβουσαρσεχιμ. This *Nebo-Sarsechim* is called in ver. 13 "*Nebushasban the Rab-saris.*" The *second* "Nergal Sharezer," the *Rab-mag*, or chief of the magicians, is known in history as *Neriglissar*, son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar (supposed by Dr. Payne Smith to have been his *vicegerent* during Nebuchadnezzar's seven years' madness: see *Daniel*). This Neriglissar seized the crown two years after Nebuchadnezzar's death, murdering Evil-merodach, the late king's son. This man's identification with the "*Rab-mag*" named here arises from Neriglissar being called "*Rabu-emga*" in the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions.

Ver. 9. "*Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard*, i.e. the *Rab-tabbáchim*, or chief of the executioners, called in the Assyrian inscriptions, "*Nabu-zir-iddina*," *i.e.* "Nebo has given offspring."

Ver. 14. "*Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.*" Jeremiah's steadfast and courageous friend, as his father "*Ahikam*" had been before him (chap. xxvi. 24, *vide* note *in loc*). He was "a man of a generous, genial nature, such as might have rallied the better spirits of his countrymen round him, and taken the place of the fallen dynasty" (Stanley).

5. Geographical Allusions.—Ver. 4. "*By the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls.*" Jerusalem then consisted of an upper and lower city; the upper including Mount Zion, with a strong fortress; the latter, to the north, was considerably lower, and more easily accessible to the Chaldeans. The "gate" from the upper city to the "king's garden" was appropriated exclusively to royalty, and "*stairs*" led down from Mount Zion and the palace to the king's garden below (Nehem. iii. 15). There was a *double wall* south of Zion, towards the plain of Jericho (ver. 5). He broke an opening through the wall in order to escape (see Ezek. xii. 12).

Ver. 5. "*Riblah.*" An ancient city on the northern boundary of Palestine, in the land of Hamath, about six miles distant from Jerusalem, forty miles south of Hamath, on the great road between Palestine and Babylon.

Literary Criticism.—Ver. 7. "*He put out Zedekiah's eyes,*" עִוֵּר. *Excavated, dug out.*

Ver. 14. "*That he should carry him home,*" where, is uncertain, for הַבַּיְתָה is indefinite. The words are lit. "to *take him out into the house.*" Not Gedaliah's, or it would have read "*his* house." Either the *Temple,* therefore, or the *king's house;* and most naturally the latter—the royal palace.

GENERAL SURVEY OF CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

I. The thread of events as indicated in this chapter. For *preliminary events* see notes on chap. xxxiv.

1. *Nebuchadnezzar's army effected an entrance into the city of Jerusalem.* It was at midnight (ver. 4). The date is carefully given in ver. 2. The date answers to our July. This was after an eighteen months' siege, B.C. 587. At this time the city was reduced to misery and starvation (Ezek. v. 12).

2. Nebuchadnezzar, who himself opened the siege in person (ver. 1), *had retired to Riblah,* and was there at its close (vers. 3, 6; *cf.* xxxviii. 17).

3. It was into *the lower city, on the north side, that the Chaldeans forced an entry* (ver. 3), "the middle gate" being situate between the lower and the upper city.

4. Zedekiah, with his wives and children and royal guards, having their heads muffled (Ezek. xii. 6, 12), *fled on the entrance of the Chaldeans,* by the gate south of Jerusalem (ver. 4), breaking an opening in the wall to get out (Ezek. xii. 12).

5. Pursued by the Chaldeans and captured in the plains of Jericho, his troops were "scattered from him" (chap. lii. 8); and Zedekiah and his family were manacled, and thus marched to Riblah to confront the wrathful king of Babylon (ver. 5).

6. *Doomed for the violation of his oath of allegiance to Babylon* (Ezek. xvii. 13–19; 2. Chron. xxxvi. 13), Zedekiah was first made to behold the slaughter of his courtiers and family, and then his own eyes were put out, and he carried away in chains to Babylon (vers. 6, 7). Thus were reconciled the two passages, Jer. xxxii. 4, and Ezek. xii. 13.

7. A month elapsed, during which the Chaldean princes had probably gone to Riblah to consult Nebuchadnezzar as to the fate of the city and inhabitants (chap. lii. 10; 2 Kings xxv. 8), and then *Nebuzar-adan came with royal orders to utterly destroy the city* (ver. 8). Fire consumes the city (chap. lii. 13); foul ravages were committed upon the inhabitants (Lam. v. 11, 12); desecration was heaped upon the dead (chap. vii. 32; viii. 3).

8. Among the *hosts of captives carried off to Ramah* (ver. 9) was Jeremiah (chap. xl. 1). See below: IV. *Kindness to the Lord's Prophet.*

II. Incidents of the siege. It began in January, B.C. 587, and continued till July, B.C. 586.

1. The store of bread became gradually exhausted (chap. lii. 6), and the *horrors of starvation set in* (Ezek. v. 10, 16; Lam. ii. 20; iv. 4, 5; v. 9, 10).

2. *In their profanity and despair,* the priests *increased their flagrant idolatries* within the very Temple of Jehovah (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14; see Ezek. viii. 7–ix.)

3. The *midnight surprise* (ver. 4), was a moment for fearful slaughter. The sleeping city awoke in terror, and soon the streets flowed with the blood of the slain (2 Chron. xxxvi. 17; Lam. i. 15). Princes were hung up by their hands on the Temple walls (Lam. v. 12).

4. The *treasures of the Temple were carried away as spoil* (2 Kings xxv. 13–17; Jer. lii. 17–22).

5. *Pilgrims from surrounding nations came to wonder and bewail over the ruins of the city* (chap. xli. 5, 6), while savage heathen tribes exulted over Jerusalem's overthrow (Ps. lxxix. 1; Ezek. xxv. 6, 8, 15; xxvi. 2).

III. Vengeance for a violated oath (vers. 5–7).

1. *Faithless himself, he was abandoned by faithless friends*—

(1.) Deserters from the city carried tidings to the Chaldean army of Zedekiah's escape (*Josephus*, Antiq. x. 8, § 2).

(2.) His "friends and captains" who fled with him abandoned him at the appearance of the Chaldean soldiers (Ibid).

4. *The wrath of the conquering king was justly severe.* Brought before Nebuchadnezzar, he was first charged by him as a "covenant-breaker," and "reproached for his ingratitude," that he had "used the power he gave him against him who gave it;" but, said Nebuchadnezzar, "God is great, who hateth this conduct of thine, and hath brought thee under us" (*Ibid*).

Then followed the horrors recorded in vers. 6, 7. And in Babylon Zedekiah was imprisoned till he died.

3. *The execration of God*, through His prophets, *fell upon him for his violated oath;* from *Jeremiah* in Jerusalem (chap. xxxvii. 9, 10), and from the prophet *Ezekiel* among those already carried captive to Babylon (Ezek. xvii. 16–20).

See homily on chap. xxxviii. 17, 18: "SINNERS THE CAUSE OF THEIR OWN SUFFERINGS."

IV. Kindness shown to the Lord's prophet (vers. 11–14).

1. *His faithful witness against Zedekiah's falsity and his nation's perfidy* had become known to Nebuchadnezzar, probably through the Jews carried captive to Babylon with Jeconiah, and now again through deserters (chap. xxxviii. 19, and ver. 9). Hence the king's clemency.

2. Nebuchadnezzar's chieftain, therefore, was *charged specially to care for the prophet* amid the judgments to be dealt on the nation.

3. A month after Zedekiah's flight (see "Thread of Events," 7, above), Nebuchadnezzar found him in the prison where "he abode" (chap. xxxviii. 28); who released him, and with the first mass of captives he was hurried on to Ramah (chap. xl. 1).

4. At this point he was released (chap. xl. 4), and allowed to choose either a place of high favour in the royal court at Babylon, or any spot in Palestine which he might elect to dwell.

5. Nebuchadnezzar, in accordance with Jeremiah's desire, placed the prophet in Gedaliah's charge (chap. xxxix. 14, xl. 5); gave him "a reward;" and the prophet made his home in Mizpah (chap. xl. 6).

Patriotic to the last, this grand servant of God "had no mind to follow" Nebuzar-adan to Babylon, "nor to dwell anywhere else, but would gladly live in the ruins of his own country," pleading that Nebuzar-adan would "set at liberty his disciple Baruch, one of a very eminent family, and exceedingly skilful in the language of his country" (*Josephus*, Antiq. x. 9, § 1).

On *the release of Jeremiah*, Wordsworth comments: "The siege and capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans were the cause of the liberation of Jeremiah. So it is often in the history of the Church. The shocks of dynasties and overthrow of thrones have often been overruled by God into occasions for the liberation and free circulation of His Word. How much has the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures been facilitated by God amid storms and revolution, as in Italy and Spain! How much may the Church of God be extended and purified by His power and love amid the coming conflicts and sufferings of the latter days!"

Note.—For descriptions of the *events of the siege and capture of Jerusalem*, see Stanley's "Jewish Church," ii. sect. xl.; and Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews," book x. chap. viii.

Topic: A LONELY HERO OF FAITH. "Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian . . . I will deliver thee . . . because thou hast put thy trust in Me, saith the Lord" (vers. 15–18).

Comp. homily on chap. xxxviii; 7–13, also outline following this, "*The Believing Ethiopian.*"

The hour had come for the noble act of this Ethiopian to receive its due reward: God would befriend him amid prevailing calamity and destruction.

I. Alone in his heroism, he is singled out by God for special recompense (vers. 17, 18).

1. *Generous deeds arrest God's attention.* His hazardous interest in the persecuted prophet was chronicled before Heaven. Nothing noble is overlooked by God (Acts x. 4).

2. *Kindnesses shown to God's servants are especially valued by God.* Those who "receive a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matt. x. 41); for they thus further the prophet's work, as "fellow-helpers to the truth" (3 John 6–8).

3. *His single-handed defence of the prophet made his valour the more worthy of reward.* It enhanced his service that it was done without the sympathy and support of others, and in the teeth of their malice. See Paul's words respecting *Onesiphorus* (2 Tim. i. 16–18).

II. Human conduct is most approved by God when inspired by faith. "Thou hast *put thy trust* in Me."

This *religious* element in his conduct does not make itself seen in his meritorious service to Jeremiah. All that we should gather as we watch his actions is, that his *humane heart* moved him to seek the prophet's release; although it is clear that he regarded the cruelty of the princes as "*evil*" in itself, and especially "evil" when done against "*the prophet*" (chap. xxxviii. 9).

1. Amid prevailing unbelief, this *Ethiopian revered the Lord.* What a rebuke on these Jews—God's favoured people! Remember the words of Jesus, "I have not found so great faith, *no, not in Israel!*"

2. His *humanity* to the prophet was *prompted by devout feeling.* He had the Lord before him in rendering this noble service to His prophet. And this explains his dauntless courage and earnest solicitude. "Ye did it *unto Me*" (Matt. xxv. 36 and 40).

3. *Trust in God sustained him* amid the perils he had to confront. Well he knew that he could not act as the prophet's friend without incurring hatred and danger; but "he trusted in the Lord that He would deliver him" (Ps. xxii. 8). Trust in God was at the root of his defiance of the mighty men who were foes of God and His servant.

Note, therefore, *Ebed-melech believed in and trusted the Lord.*

(*a.*) He held *the word of the Lord* which Jeremiah proclaimed *against the city to be true* (ver. 16).

(*b.*) *He placed no hope on the means of succour or escape* in which the king and his courtiers trusted.

(*c.*) *He withstood the cruelty of Jeremiah's enemies* as resistance of the Lord's purposes.

(*d.*) He placed his only hope on the power and graciousness of God Himself.

III. In the hour of His servant's alarm, God manifests His timely favour (ver. 17). For here observe—

1. *How this noble and daring man was now disturbed by alarm.* "Men of whom *thou art afraid!*" Courageous though he had been when Jeremiah was perishing, he yet realised impending danger, and trembled in fear. Whether these "*men*" of whom he was afraid were the princes of Zedekiah's court, or the Chaldeans who were besieging the city, is uncertain; most naturally the latter, for the mention of "*the sword*" connects his dread with the army.

2. *How tenderly God comforts the souls of His faithful children* (vers. 17, 18). Quiets his fear with *express* and *appropriate* assurances.

3. *How envious is their lot whom the Lord lovingly befriends!* In that hour of Zion's overthrow what avails it to Zedekiah that he was *a king*, or to the princes that they were the *mighty ones* of that doomed kingdom? And what harms it now that Ebed-melech was only a *servant* in the king's household, and *hated* by those in power? The *Lord was on his side;* and while king and nobles suffered miserably for their ungodliness (vers. 6, 7), this Ethiopian was divinely shielded from mischief (see Heb. xiii. 6; Ps. cxlvi. 5).

Observe—(i.) *Faith may often be found in those we should least expect to be believers.* "There are last that be first," &c.

(ii.) *Faith never is allowed to pass unrewarded* by God, who prizes a soul's trust beyond all else. "Because he trusted in Me."

The Believing Ethiopian.

Connect chap. xxxviii. 7–13 with chap. xxxix. 15–18.

Help for God's servants arises from directions little expected. Though not one of Jeremiah's fellow-countrymen befriended him, a Cushite eunuch became his friend.

I. Godliness in an unlikely person. "Ethiopian."

1. A prophet's *ministry may win success where not expected.*

2. Though hearers we naturally supposed would regard our messages turn aside, there *are hearts opened to our word.*

3. *Buried seed* will, in *its right time*, spring up and *reward the faithful worker for God.*

II. Faith stirring the soul to heroism.

1. Convinced that God's servant suffered wrongfully, *he could not longer conceal his attachment.*

2. *Reckless of perils*, he attempted the prophet's deliverance.

3. A *lowly servant acting in defiance of mighty courtiers*, and even rebuking the cowardly king!

III. Religious life flowing out in kindness.

1. How natural for a *convert to love his teacher.*

2. *Piety beautifully expressed* — in services of kindness.

3. Affection makes the soul *solicitous and courageous;* he could not rest: pleaded with the king; hastened to rescue. What a motive in life is godly affection!

IV. Noble service signally rewarded.

1. A *message of comfort* sent to calm his fears.

2. In the general ruin *this godly man was saved.* None escapes God's care who trust in Him.

3. *No service for God is allowed to pass unrequited.* "A cup of cold water given . . . shall in no wise lose its reward."

V. God's pleasure in His servants' welfare.

1. Ebed-melech's generous help to Jeremiah, by which *God's prophet was saved from death*, won for the Ethiopian special Divine favour. For *God was concerned that His prophet should not suffer;* and He providentially provided deliverance through this alien eunuch. For He "careth for" His own.

2. Hence, also, *God was concerned for the Ethiopian's comfort and safety.* He was a child of God; and amid menacing perils which filled him with fears, God sent assurance of his preservation.

3. *God loves His saints*, and will assuredly *work out their full redemption.*

Note.—Cramer remarks: "This pious courtier had interceded for the prophet with the king; but the prophet had in turn interceded for him with God the Lord. Ebed-melech had drawn him out of the pit, but Jeremiah draws him by his prayer from the jaws of all Chaldean war-vortices. *Preachers do their patrons more good than they get from them.*"

Ver. 18. *Theme:* TRUST.

I. *This trust in a Power Divine,* and in a Hand unseen, is regarded as fanaticism *by scoffers and sceptics.*

But against this David says, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." It is trust in the *Infinite,* the *Immutable,* the *Immortal.*

II. *Trust in the Lord* calms and assures the soul *in times of alarm and distress.* So that the believer says, "I will trust and *not be afraid.*"

III. *Trust in God* both pleases Him and wins special manifestations of His favour. "The Lord shall deliver him *because* he trusteth in Me." God is honoured by our trust, and He honours them that honour Him.

IV. *Trust in God for our welfare and success* does not supersede the necessity of effort, nor the wisdom of *prayer.* "Trust in the Lord at all times; pour out your hearts before Him." God expects men to *ask* for *grace.*

Men of faith and prayer have Omnipotence on their side, and can confidently say, "No weapon formed against us shall prosper."—"*Walks with Jeremiah,*" *Rev. D. Pledge.*

CHAPTER XL.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—A purely historical chapter, of events following the city's ruin. It records the out-gleaming of a ray of hope upon the appalling gloom which had befallen the land, in the appointment of Gedaliah as its governor; and also its quick extinction in the conspiracy of Ishmael, a prince of the royal family (chap. xl. 1).

Personal Allusions.—Ver. 5. "*Gedaliah*" (*vide* note on chap. xxxix. 14).

Ver. 8. "*Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah.*" The most conspicuous of a band of well-known chiefs, who during the siege had fled across the Jordan. Here he had become closely leagued with Baalis, king of Ammon (Josephus, *Antiq.* x. 9, 2). Prompted by Baalis (ver. 14), and coveting Gedaliah's place and power, he plotted Gedaliah's assassination.

"*Johanan and Jonathan:*" Jewish chiefs and brothers. *Johanan* warned Gedaliah of Ishmael's treachery, and subsequently pursued the assassin (chap. xli. 13, &c.)

Geographical References.—Ver. 6. "*Mizpah.*" Asa had fortified it as an outpost of his capital against the northern kingdom (chap. xli. 9; 2 Chron. xvi. 6). A ridge north-east of Jerusalem, and immediately overlooking the city.

Ver. 8. "*The Netophathite.*" Netophah, a village near Bethlehem (1 Chron. ii. 54).

Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 5. "*Now while he was not yet gone back*"—Ewald's correction of the Hebrew text, substituting וְעוֹדֶנּוּ for וְשׁוֹב; "*And as he yet answered nothing:*" or, "Before he made any reply" (Henderson).

Ver. 10. "*To serve the Chaldeans,*" לַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי הַכַּשְׂדִּים, "*to stand before the Chaldeans,*" *i.e.* to act as their representative, to negotiate with them.

Ver. 14. "*Slay thee:*" lit. "*strike thee in the soul,*" *i.e.* a deadly stroke.

SECTIONS OF CHAPTER XL.

Section 1–6. *Jeremiah's release and patriotism.*
7–16. *Gedaliah's elevation and peril.*

Vers. 1–6. JEREMIAH'S RELEASE AND PATRIOTISM.

(See on previous chapter, "*Kindness shown to the Lord's Prophet.*")

Ver. 1. *Theme:* THE CHRISTIAN IN THE TUMULT OF THE WORLD.

(i.) *He is regarded externally like others.* Treated as a captive. Carried away with the exiles to Ramah.

(ii.) *Watched over by God with especial care;* so that he is unharmed; kindly dealt with; his worth recognised and rewarded.

(iii.) *Directs all his efforts to the welfare of God's kingdom.* His concern being to preserve God's honour, to vindicate His righteousness, and to be useful to to his own people.

From this patriotic purpose, neither the violence nor the friendliness of the world can turn him aside. (Comp. *Naegelsbach* in Lange.)

Vers. 2, 3. *Theme:* GOD RECOGNISED IN HIS JUDGMENTS. And this by a *heathen!* Thus God makes the very heathen testify for Him against His rebellious people. Out of even great and terrible calamities, such as Jerusalem's overthrow, good is brought; this *heathen captain's eyes are opened* to Divine truths.

His hopeful progress towards conversion—

(i.) *He acknowledges Jehovah as God* (ver. 2).

(ii.) *That the Lord foresees future events* (ver. 2).

(iii.) *That it is in His name that God's servants speak* (ver. 2), and pronounce upon future events.

(iv.) *He recognises the Divine Hand in judgments* (ver. 3). No claiming that the Chaldeans had wrought the overthrow; no! "The *Lord*," &c.

(v.) *Traces calamities to their cause:* the moral degeneracy and spiritual apostasy of the people (ver. 3).

(vi.) *Declares that disobedience to God brings doom* (ver. 3).

Ver. 4. *Theme:* GOD'S HIDDEN HAND IN HUMAN KINDNESS.

I. **Benefactors are God's benefactions.** They come from Him, at *the right moment*, to *supply our pressing wants.*

II. **Unconscious agencies of Divine kindness.** This captain knew not that he *worked out God's designs* and *administered God's mercies.*

III. **God's disguised Hand.** He conceals Himself in His works; there is "a hiding of His power"—

In Nature. Stored out of sight in flowers, fruits, delights of creation.

In Providence. "Men are Thy hand." He works through them. For He uses His creatures as channels of His help.

In Grace. Light and peace come into human souls through *human* words; from "sermons in stones, books in the running brooks," &c. Yet all grace is God's gift.

"*Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights.*"

Vers. 5, 6. *Theme.* A PATRIOTIC CHOICE.

I. **Contrasted offers.**

1. *Of location.* In *Babylonia*, honour and comfort; in *Judea*, sadness and privation.

2. *Of service.* In *Babylonia*, among the noblest of his countrymen, and in the favour of royalty; in *Judea*, amid the poor and rabble.

II. **A difficult choice.** Hence his *faltering* a moment (ver. 5).

1. *A heart drawn in opposite directions:* in pity towards his *exiled people;* in love for his dear but *dishonoured land.*

2. *In perplexity concerning God's will.* Not easy to see where he could best serve God; not clear as to God's purpose.

III. **A patriotic decision.**

1. Thus he *disproved his sympathy* with the Chaldeans, notwithstanding his advice to his countrymen to surrender to them. For his counsel had proceeded from purest love to his fatherland.

2. Thus he *proved his devotion to his suffering people*, imitating Moses (Heb. xi. 25).

3. Thus he *kept alive God's word amid a despondent remnant.* In Babylon the exiles had Ezekiel and Daniel; but had he gone, these scattered remnants would have been "as sheep having no shepherd." In all this "*he looked not on his own things, but also on the things of others.*"

Vers. 7–16. GEDALIAH'S EXALTATION AND PERIL.

I. **Integrity rewarded** (ver. 5). His faithfulness to Chaldea had arisen from the consciousness that God willed it so. His obedience to duty won him human confidence and high exaltation.

II. **A renewal of hope** (ver. 13). Under Gedaliah's wise administration the desolation might have been in part repaired. God gives to the downcast a gleam of hope (vers. 9–11). It is well to make

the best of our misfortunes, and wisely accept the facts of Providence (ver. 10).

III. Treachery in ambush.

1. Envy covets what it has no right to claim.

2. A generous nature finds it difficult to be suspicious (ver. 14).

3. It is a mystery in God's Providence that He suffers the righteous to act unwisely, and thus fall into the hands of malignant and envious men (ver. 16). But an explanation is indicated in Isa. lvii. 1.

Comments—

"Those who are of a pious disposition cannot believe so much evil as is told of people. But we must not trust too much, for the world is full of falseness (Wisdom xxxvii. 13). He who believes too easily will be often deceived; and he who believes no one is also deceived. Therefore is he the happy man who can preserve the golden mean."—*Cramer.*

"Gedaliah seems to have been of our Queen Elizabeth's temper, who was heard to declare that she could believe nothing of her people which mothers could not believe of their children."—*Trapp.*

"Gedaliah thought that Ishmael durst not attempt anything against him *because of the Babylonians;* besides he knew *his own innocency;* and he believed in Ishmael's pretended familiarity with him, which, he might think, other captains envied. Sure it is that good Gedaliah was too secure. '*Nam qui omnia credit, et qui nihil credit, ex æquo peccat*' (Seneca). It is no less a fault to believe nothing than to believe everything. Reports are to be neither overheeded nor overslighted, especially when life is concerned."—*Trapp.*

GENERAL REFLECTIONS: ISRAEL'S MISFORTUNES TYPICAL OF HUMAN LIFE.

This overthrow of the people has its analogies:—

I. *The deportation of the whole people in chains and fetters* is a type of our *universal human misery,* from which no one (not even Jeremiah) is free.

II. *The fate of Gedaliah and the journey to Egypt* is a type of the *insufficiency of all human help.*

III. *As the Jews after Gedaliah's murder,* so men at all times *find protection and deliverance* in the Lord alone.—*Naegelsbach.*

"Misfortune is like the waves of the sea: when one is broken another follows, and the end of one trouble is the beginning of another."—*Cramer.*

CHAPTER XLI.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—**Chronology of the Chapter.**—Only three months after Jerusalem was captured by the Chaldeans: "in the *seventh month*" (ver. 1, comp. chap. xxxix. 2). See notes on two preceding chapters.

Personal Allusion. Ver. 1. "*Elishama.*" *Vide* note, chap. xxxvi. 12, *in loc.*

Geographical References. Vers. 7 and 9. "*The pit:*" properly *cistern.* "On the summit of the hill was Asa's fortress, with a deep well within a high enclosed courtyard, dug by him for the security of the garrison" (Stanley). Asa's reason for digging this cistern was, that when the city should be besieged by the king of Israel there might be sufficient water for the inhabitants. (See 1 Kings xv. 22.)

Ver. 12. "*The great waters that are in Gibeon.*" Gibeon is about two miles north of Mizpah. The מַיִם רַבִּים, "great waters," mean the vast pool and fountains which Robinson (*Researches,* ii. 136) describes, about 120 feet by 100. (See 2 Sam. ii. 13.)

Ver. 17. "*The habitation of Chimham:*" *lit. Geruth-Chimham, i.e.* the caravanserai belonging to Chimham (2 Sam. xix. 37, 38). Johanan makes this his headquarters until he could arrange his flight to Egypt.

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER XLI.

ISHMAEL'S SANGUINARY CONSPIRACY.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* UNSUSPICIOUSNESS. "*They did eat bread together in Mizpah.*"

I. *Unsuspiciousness is indicative of* a frank and generous soul.

1. *Honest men are naturally trustful.* Themselves faithful, they do not suspect, *in seeming friends*, perfidious conspirators!

2. *Kindly hearts entertain no dark suspicions.* "Charity *thinketh no evil*" (1 Cor. xiii. 5). It is painful to look for a villain in him who dips his sop with us in the same dish.

So far Gedaliah's was a *praiseworthy simplicity.*

II. *Unsuspiciousness runs the* risks of incaution.

1. *Guileless minds cannot credit base reports.* Although warned (chap. xl. 14, 16), he could not believe it possible that Ishmael plotted foul designs. Conscious only of innocency and good purposes himself, he found it impossible to believe that wrong was intended him.

2. *Indiscreet trust pays a severe penalty.* In this case, Gedaliah's virtue of unsuspiciousness became a fault; for in being injudiciously trustful he both imperilled his own life and *exposed the public interests to disaster.*

III. *Unsuspiciousness is* apt to invite calamity.

1. *By neglecting lurking danger.* It was Gedaliah's duty to have regarded the information given him (chap. xl. 14), and arrested a villain whose plots threatened the public weal.

2. *By shrinking from exercising a just severity.* For the incapability of suspicions is allied often with a *weak regard to justice;* and hence a *disinclination to punish wrong* (chap. xl. 16).

3. *By tolerating evident evils.* And here is the folly and blunder of habitual unsuspiciousness: it *will not see evils;* it prefers to let them alone, hoping for the best. And thus iniquities thrive under the benign tolerance of an ingenuous rule.

IV. *Unsuspiciousness* plays into the hands of villany.

1. *Villany is a fact,* existing and *active* in all human society. He who ignores it is wanting in prudence.

2. *Villany plots deeds so foul* that *no vigilance can be too alert* to check its purposes. By neglecting this wise suspiciousness Gedaliah wronged Johanan (chap. xl. 16), imperilled the peace of the people, and placed himself in the assassin's grasp (chap. xli. 1).

3. *Villany shrinks not from outrage on noblest souls.* Surely it is the highest crime (xliv. 2) thus to woo generous confidence only to act the fiend! "*One may smile, and smile, and be a villain!*" The execrable character of such villany Shakespeare describes—

> "My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for a villain."
> —*Richard III.* v. 3.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* HOSPITALITY OUTRAGED. "*Then* arose Ishmael, . . . and *slew him!*"

Murder is frightful enough in itself, but the *moment* of the deed makes it heinous in the extreme.

I. Hospitality: the infamy of its abuse. Ishmael polluted his hands with innocent blood at the sacred table of hospitality.

Universally and in all ages hospitality has been cherished as sacred.

The ancient heathen nations regarded it so, and its violation was counted by them the greatest atrocity.

An oath given when at table and afterwards broken called for summary vengeance.

Among the Greeks existed a custom of pledging lasting friendship in return for hospitality. It was in this wise: On a four-sided stone was written the name of each guest; the stone, called "*Tessara Hospitalis,*" was then broken, and each friend carried away the part of the stone bearing the other's name, and it entitled the holder of the part to ask protection and shelter from the other whenever necessity arose.

See Percy Anecdotes, on "Hospitality," for illustrations.

II. Jealousy: outraging every instinct of gratitude. Ishmael had been treated with magnanimity by Gedaliah, and now was being entertained with courtesy and kindness; yet—

1. *Ambition and envy prompted him to violence.* He was "of the royal seed" (ver. 1), and could not endure that Gedaliah should be in exaltation.

"*Base envy* withers at another's joy,
And hates that excellence it cannot reach."
—*Thomson's Seasons*, 283.

"*Jealousy* is cruel as the grave."
—*Cant.* viii. 6.

"Jealousy, the injured lover's hell."
—*Milton's Paradise Lost.*

"Fling away ambition:
By that sin fell the angels."
—*Shakespeare, Henry VIII.*, iii. 2.

2. *Innocence was no shield* against the lust of jealousy. Gedaliah had done Ishmael no wrong. Ishmael had not been deposed from power. All Gedaliah's acts had been generous and trustful, yet Ishmael could not endure the sight of his supremacy.

Such outrage on innocence refutes all natural sentiments in the human heart, and shows Ishmael to be an odious monster. *Horace* speaks the natural sentiment which we cherish towards innocence—

"True, conscious honour is to feel no sin,
He's armed without who's innocent within:
Be this thy screen, and this thy wall of brass." —*Pope's Horace.*

But it was this conscious innocence which made Gedaliah fearless and trustful, and should have ensured his safety.

"If there be a crime
Of deeper dye than all the guilty train
Of human vices, *'tis ingratitude.*"—*Brooke.*

"Ingratitude is treason to mankind."
—*Thomson.*

Theme: GEDALIAH'S FATE AN EXAMPLE. "Illustrating what befalls even the most noble in times of deep corruption:—

(i.) They enjoy general confidence.

(ii.) They are incapable of attributing extreme wickedness to men.

(iii.) They become a sacrifice to their confidence.

(iv.) They are therefore not in a condition to stay the divine judgments."
—*Naegelsbach.*

"Judas's kiss and Jacob's brethren are very common in the world, and take after their grandfather Cain, who spake kindly to Abel and yet had bloodthirsty thoughts (Gen. iv. 8). Yea, they take after their father the devil, who is a murderous spirit (John viii. 14), and disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14)."—*Cramer.*

"Much treachery and cruelty hath been exercised at feasts. Absalom slew Amnon at a feast; so did Zimri, King Elah; so did Alexander, Philotas."—*Trapp.*

Josephus suggests that Ishmael seized the opportunity of slaughter when Gedaliah and his guests were merry with wine, and his words are: "When Gedaliah had feasted Ishmael, and those that were with him, in a splendid manner at his table, and had given them presents, he became disordered in drink, while he endeavoured to be very merry with them; and when Ishmael saw him in this case, and that he was drowned in his cups to the degree of insensibility and fallen asleep, he rose up on a sudden, with his ten friends, and slew Gedaliah and those that were with him at the feast."—*Antiq.* x. 9, 4.

Ver. 3. "Ishmael also *slew the Chaldeans and men of war.*" This gives support to *Kitto's* suggestion, that "he regarded Gedaliah with *hatred*, as one who had *stooped to hold office under the destroyers of his country.*"—*Daily Bib. Illus.*

Ver. 6. *Theme:* A TRAITOR'S TEARS. "Ishmael went forth *weeping all along as he went.*"

I. Patriotic pilgrims (ver. 5). It was now the season of the Feast of Tabernacles, and these pilgrims journeyed to Jerusalem—

1. *Mourning over the Temple's ruin.*

2. *Carrying their devout offerings*, to present them amid the scene of desolation.

A piteous spectacle! Oh how their souls grieved for the destruction of "the house of the Lord"! They would fain, amid the ruins, keep the observances of the law, and mourn before the Lord who had permitted this direful calamity to overtake His sinning people. Their aspects show them to be—

(*a.*) A *penitential* group; (*b.*) bringing their *propitiatory* offerings before God; (*c.*) touched with *patriotic* sorrow

II. A blasphemous decoy. "Ishmael went weeping."

1. *Pretending that he also bemoaned the ruin of Zion.*

2. *Capturing them by his foul deceit.*

They were unsuspicious of his murderous designs; and he intending to slay them, lest they, discovering his deed to Gedaliah, should rouse the country against him before he had completed his usurpation, decoyed them to destruction.

What barbarity is here, thus to seize *defenceless strangers*, and slay them without the faintest provocation!

How does this illustrate the *progress of guilt;* having polluted his hands in blood, Ishmael went on to even baser effrontery and deeper villany.

Ver. 12. *Theme:* TREACHERY THWARTED. His design seems to have been to carry them as slaves into Ammon. The captives hailed their deliverer with joy, and deserted at once to Johanan, so that Ishmael returned, *disgraced and defeated*, to the king of Ammon, whose base purposes he attempted to serve. Yet—

How great woe may one foul hand work! How startling that no sorer punishment overtook him!

Nevertheless, though guilty men escape the immediate penalty of crime, their prolonged life only prolongs their career of wretchedness and terror, *execrated by righteous men, and haunted by their guilty memories;* for in this way God drags criminals *daily* before the tribunal of their own memory, and then lets them live under the curse of their own conscience.

Vers. 16–18. *Theme:* MISTAKEN PATRIOTISM. "Johanan departed *to go into Egypt.*"

I. Courage ungoverned by godliness.

1. His energy for his people was praiseworthy.

2. His valour wrought their deliverance (ver. 16).

3. Yet his departure from God's purpose, in inclining towards Egypt (ver. 17), showed both *unbelief* and *wilfulness.*

II. Safety sought from a forbidden alliance.

1. Though strictly denounced by God's messengers, yet he intended to trust in Egypt.

2. *Fear* (of the Chaldeans) was allowed to rule them instead of *faith* (in God) (ver. 18).

3. Turning from the straight path of duty they were led to a tortuous and destructive policy.

III. Obedience to God proves the highest patriotism.

1. It wins more than noblest valour can effect.

2. Righteousness is always safest; doing God's will regardless of consequences, untroubled by fears.

3. Simple faith in God's word, regardless of our own fears, always issues best

CHAPTER XLII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—Chronology as in previous chapter. Observe: *Jeremiah and Baruch* had been *among the captives of Ishmael*, whom Johanan *rescued* (chap. xliii. 6).

State of the Nation.—The preceding chapter reveals the *baseness* of the "royal seed" and the *infatuation* of the people's latest leader. This chapter discloses the obstinacy of the *people* "from the least to the greatest" in disobeying God's purpose and in dissembling their prayers. Thus, all God's chastisements leaves them still a rebellious nation and justifies the severity of His disciplinary punishments.

Personal Allusion.—Ver. 1. "*Jezaniah:*" called "Azariah" (chap. xliii. 2).

Literary Criticisms.—Vers. 2, 3. "THE LORD THY GOD." Some few authorities have אֱלֹהֵינוּ, "*our* God." But probably the form is correct, "The Lord *thy* God," expressing the people's sense of Jeremiah's peculiar relationship to Jehovah But when the prophet replies (ver. 4), "The Lord *your* God," as if to remind them that He had not cast them off, they change the form of expression into "The Lord *our* God" (ver. 6).

Ver. 12. "*I will show mercies unto you, that he,*" &c., *i.e.* I will *give you compassion*, or will *excite pity for you; i.e.* in the king of Babylon.

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER XLII.

WILFULNESS IN PRAYER: GOD'S GUIDANCE ASKED HYPOCRITICALLY.

Vers. 2, 3. *Theme:* PERPLEXED SUPPLIANTS. "*That God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.*"

If only these words had been *sincere*, could their request have been better, or their language more devout?

(*A.*) *Regarding the words as* SINCERE, they suggest—

I. Inquirers anxiously seeking the light.

II. Suppliants humbly craving God's favour.

III. Baffled souls troubled to gain clearer leading.

IV. Obedient children eager more perfectly to do God's will.

(*B.*) Regarding the words AS HYPOCRITICAL, they show—

I. Good words may be spoken by false lips.

II. Wilful inquirers mocking God with a pretence of seeking guidance.

III. Contumacious sinners assuming the disguise of piety.

IV. While in the very path of transgression (chap. xli. 17), rebels will dissemble and ask God's permission.

Ver. 4. *Theme:* "NO CLOAK FOR THEIR SIN."

I. *Disobedience done without full knowledge* is a lesser crime than when clearer light is asked and gained. Had they gone to Egypt without seeking God's decision upon their course, their rebellion would have been less defiant and blasphemous.

1. The awful guilt of *sinning against light!*

2. The baseness of *asking light while intending to defy it.*

II. *Audacity reaches its culmination* when rebellion ventures to trifle with prayer. Plainly they used prayer merely to get their own way, but determined to act as they wished should God oppose them.

1. *Hypocrisy flaunts its pretences in the very face of God.*

2. *Determined sinners sometimes use religion to gain their own ends.*

III. Judgment will be weighted by the woe of slighted grace.

1. God *may be sought* in prayer; their conduct proves they *knew this.*

2. *Divine guidance* is granted to the perplexed; this also they knew, yet trifled with it.

3. *Abuse of God's goodness* will provoke the sternest justice; and darken the soul's doom.

Ver. 6. *Theme:* ABSOLUTE SUBMISSION TO GOD'S DIRECTION. Consider the *state of affairs:* Jerusalem overthrown; only "a few" people left in the city; internal conspiracies: Gedaliah and Ishmael; a "remnant" rescued from Ishmael by Johanan; a despondent and subdued people.

Now arose the *question as to the next movement:* Should they remain in their country amid disturbances, or go to Egypt and place themselves under foreign protection?

Life is full of this asking, "*What next?*" From that day to this.

The words "To whom we send thee" show that the people knew they had a prophet among them whom they could send to the Lord. But *we have no one whom we can commission to go to God for us;* we must go each one for ourselves.

Yet are *we not less sure of a hearing;* for we have a "*Mediator* between God and man," and "Him the Father heareth always."

I. God appealed to for direction in difficult circumstances. This was of old done *by Israel as a nation habitually;* they hearkened to God's direction in their oracles. This is the *instinctive act of a godly soul.* Marks out whether godly or not. Should use God freely.

1. *Can we as surely learn God's voice now* as when He spake by such direct communication? It was so assuring to have a personal hearing and answer. Yet if God has given counsel *for every case,* and given it *once for all* in His *written Word,* we can refer to that. To

question that the Bible holds advice for our *personal* and *special* wants, is to doubt the wisdom of God who inspired the word *for all His people, for every circumstance, for all time.*

Besides which, *prayer is our privilege* freely to use, as well as the Scriptures.

Do ye not also *send us, God's messengers,* to Him for *a word from the Lord for you?* "Take heed how ye hear."

Moreover, cannot God *impress upon our minds and hearts* His will? By His Holy Spirit; by "working within us to will and do of His good pleasure."

2. *Is it right to hazard ourselves when we act from the persuasion that we are doing God's will?* "Whether it *be evil,* we will obey."

But that inquiry means, Shall *expediency* alone rule us, so that we only do what seems *advantageous* to us and *not* "evil"?

But if this were our guiding law, would missionary pioneers go with the Gospel where destruction threatened them? Would needy men, for conscience' sake, stand aside from gain and reward? Would faithful disciples of Jesus carry their cross and endure suffering and toil in following Him? Would the Christian worker penetrate into vile courts where fever raged? Would disciples expose themselves to the ordeal of fierce mocking, &c.? Would the widow have surrendered "all her living"?

Not expediency, therefore; but *implicit obedience.*

3. *Can God really command what seems adverse to our good?* Yes; "*good* or *evil;*" *i.e.,* it may seem so to us.

Johanan thought that he and the remnant would be safest in Egypt (ver. 14). But God refused (ver. 19).

In asking God's counsel *they knew beforehand He might refuse their wish.* Yet they promised to abide by His counsel, "whether it be good or whether it be evil." For "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither His ways our ways."

Surely it is only to mock God to ask Him to guide, and then *only to obey when we approve!* "Shall we receive *good* at the hands of the Lord, and shall we not also receive *evil?*"

II. Man's resolve of unfaltering obedience to the voice of the Lord. Nothing could be more unreserved than this avowal: "Whether it be good or evil, *we will obey the voice* of the Lord," &c.

If He *is* "the Lord our God," then such complete trust is natural and right.

1. *Their acknowledgment of perplexity* (ver. 3). They could not tell what was best or wisest to do; so sought guidance. Too often pride prevents our making such an acknowledgment; and not only when baffled by *life's* perplexities, but equally in *spiritual* quests. But we are here reminded once again that "it *is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*" We walk in darkness, stumbling; but knowing not at what we stumble. If we are thus incompetent to choose and act alone in earthly affairs, how much more in eternal matters! Baffled concerning these trifling things, how shall we direct our career towards heaven? We cannot. Acknowledge ignorance, therefore, and incompetency; and go to God.

2. *Their belief in the Divine wisdom.* However it may seem to us, "good or evil," God knows best what we should do; go to Him and inquire. Even "the foolishness of God is wiser" than man's wisdom. He is perfect in knowledge. All His people believe this. Therefore "*if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God,*" &c. Pray more when perplexed—in providence—in religion. God will then teach you, and "show you the way wherein," &c. (ver. 3).

3. *Their intention respecting the Lord's answer.* And here we are confronted with an astonishing illustration of the influence of self-will; how blinding! (chap. xliii. 2). Did they *mean to abide by the reply* Jeremiah brought? They took *an oath* that they would (ver. 5); but "*ye dissembled in your hearts,*" &c. (ver. 20). This is very awful. Oh! let us heed lest we do the same, set aside the Divine counsels by our wilfulness. Do we not often pray for guidance, have we not also vowed obedience, did we not profess to lay ourselves out for service; and somehow there came to us a *conviction*

of God's will; but it was contrary to our secret inclinations, so *we beguiled it away!* Beware of "dissembling in your hearts" when you deal with God!

"*Good* or *evil.*" Let us be honest in our resolve. Ask God, meaning to obey; and obey as if we believe God had taught us what to do. This is "faith, nothing doubting."

III. Implicit obedience to God involves our highest welfare. "That it may be *well with us, when we obey,*" &c. True, "Godliness is great gain;" always for our good to obey.

1. *God will befriend those who rely upon Him* (vers. 10, 11). It is an old truth, God preserveth His saints. We are His, if we trust in Him; and He is "for us." "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken" (Ps xxxvii. 25). "According to your faith be it done unto you."

2. *He will deal most graciously with those who obey Him* (ver. 12). "Show mercies;" not only avert ill, but add blessings. Yes, and more; God would dispose the heart of the king of Babylon to their favour, "that *he* may have mercy upon you and cause you to return to your own land" (ver. 12). For "when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

3. *He will gather His faithful people together,* and far exceed their prayers and hopes in His dealings with them. For God would effect their ultimate restoration to their land, would raise again about them all the old joys of Jerusalem, and recover to them their lost—national and spiritual—privileges. This they *desired;* but it was *more than they asked.*

To an obedient child we not only give what it requests, we draw the child to our very heart. Thus doth God. He will gather us into close and tender relationship to Himself. Yes, and in due season, to His land, where foes shall no more invade, and we shall never more be separated from "the Lord our God." And in the spiritual blessings with which He will enrich us until the day of our "gathering together unto Him," we shall find that "it is *well with us* when we obey the voice of the Lord our God."

Ver. 7. *Theme:* A Delayed Answer to Prayer.

i. *Revelation waited for;* the prophet would not speak till he had heard.

ii. *Interval for deliberation;* that the people might judge of their own willingness to accept the message of God.

iii. *Obedience tested;* for true obedience bows to God's time, as well as to His way and will.

Ver. 11. *Theme:* God's Repentance. "I repent Me of the evil that I have done unto you." God is said to repent when *He alters His outward methods* of dealing with men (*Augustine*).

"*I am satisfied with the punishment* I have inflicted on you, if only you add not a new offence" (*Grotius*).

Ver. 14. *Theme:* Delusions of Disobedience.

I. A forbidden course. To "go into the land of Egypt."

The reason for this prohibition was that Egypt was *infamous for idolatry,* full of the *snares of luxury,* doomed for *its oppression of their ancestors.* It was a standing prohibition (Deut. xvii. 16).

II. Coveted advantages. "Where we shall see no war," &c.

1. *Sin always entices with delusive promises.* But Egypt's troubles were just setting in, and there would be only war and woe till it was destroyed.

2. *Sinners show their rebellion in disbelieving God's promises* (vers. 10, 11), as if He were a liar (1 John ver. 10).

III. Vain hopes.

1. *Though they had deserved only evil,* they still dreamed of peace and prosperity. So do transgressors still "deceive their own souls."

2. *Though they intended further transgression,* they boasted in the prospect of comfort. But "the ways of transgressors are hard;" and "though hand join in hand, they shall not go unpunished."

Ver. 16. *Theme:* Calamity Pursuing Transgressors. "The sword which ye

feared shall *overtake you there;* and the famine whereof ye were afraid *shall follow close after you there* in Egypt."

i. *Because sinners carry their own woe with them* wherever they go, even into hell.

ii. *Because God follows transgressors* wherever they go, and His being with them makes their terror.

I. **The very evils we think to escape by sin,** we bring the *more surely* upon ourselves.

1. *For the act of sinning renders punishment certain.*

2. *Wrong courses never can lead aright.*

3. *Adopting evil devices in order to avert evil results* is the height of frenzy and folly.

II. **What our hearts most eagerly determine** *often proves most fatal to us.*

1. *Because the heart is deceitful and wicked,* and to follow its devices and desires lands us in rebellion against God and neglect of our highest spiritual good. "Whoso trusteth his own heart is a fool."

2. *Because sin blinds our perception of good* and magnifies *the advantages of evil.* It reverses the telescope when looking at good and *minimises it;* but it turns the instrument in full focus on evil, and vastly *enlarges it.* "The god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not."

3. *Because the highest blessings we receive come to us through self-denial and suffering.* Certainly *not through indulgence!* "Take up thy cross and follow Me." "*Strait is the gate* that leadeth unto life."

III. **No hiding-place can be found** *for escape from the penalties of wrong.*

1. *Not on earth.* "If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth." See ver. 17.

2. *Not in death.* "If I make my bed in Hades."

3. *Not in eternity.* For judgment and doom meet the sinner there (Rev. vi. 15–17. See ver. 18.)

Ver. 18. *Theme:* APPEAL TO PAST JUDGMENTS—A WARNING. "*As* Mine *anger and* My fury *hath been poured forth* upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; *so shall* My *fury be poured forth* upon you."

I. **Predicted doom fulfilled.** For *what had occurred* had been foretold (chap. vii. 20; xviii. 16). God had acted true to His word.

II. **Repeated guilt threatened.** The arrows of the Lord are in quiver, ready.

III. **Neglected warnings punished.** In vain all appeals (ver. 19); certain therefore the doom (vers. 21, 22).

Ver. 20. *Theme:* HYPOCRISY OF DESIRING THE PRAYERS OF OTHERS. Frequently persons desire their ministers' prayers, yet are strangers to fear of God, and negligent of duty. Place a false and dangerous dependence on others' prayers. "Remnant" of the Jews left from captivity entreated Jeremiah's prayers (ver. 2), and took oath to obey voice of Lord (ver. 5). But they had determined to go to Egypt, and asked his prayers hypocritically. Text.

I. **Consider on what principle desiring the prayers of others is grounded.**

1. A persuasion that it is *our duty to pray one for another.* (1.) This a dictate of *reason* (Ezra vi. 10; 1 Macc. xii. 11). (2.) Expressly required in *the word of God* (Jer. xxix. 7; 1 Tim. ii. 1; Jas. v. 16). Thus Samuel saith (1 Sam. xii. 23). (3.) The pious *custom of good men.* Abraham for Sodom. Hezekiah sent Isaiah to pray for him and his kingdom. Christ prayed for disciples; Paul, in all his epistles, for his friends.

2. Desiring the prayers of others supposeth *that God hath often answered intercessory prayers of good men.* God loves good men; they have an interest in heaven; others are favoured for their sake (Gen. xx. 7; Job xlii. 8). Moses prayed, and Amalek was vanquished, fire in camp quenched, plague stayed, destructive serpents removed, Miriam's leprosy healed, plagues taken from Pharaoh; God so influenced by his prayers that He said, "Let Me alone," &c. (Exod. xxxii. 10). Hezekiah's prayer for offenders (2 Chron. xxx. 20). Same truth implied in inhibition of prayers (Jer. vii. 16; xi. 14; xiv. 11; xxix. 7).

Peter delivered from prison (Acts xii. 5); Paul rescued (2 Cor. i. 11). On this principle the intercession of Christ is founded; "Father loveth Him," &c., "heareth Him always."

3. It supposeth that it is *very desirable, specially in some cases*, to have the prayers of others for us; that we reap advantages. God heeds the pleadings of those He loves. There are special circumstances when particularly desirable; *physical prostration*, when cannot pray for ourselves; *perplexity or distress of mind*, as in Job xxxvii. 19; in cases of *great importance and difficulty*, as Jer. xlii. 3. Encouraged by Christ's promise (Matt. xviii. 19).

II. When they who desire the prayers of others may be said to dissemble in their hearts.

1. When they *desire them without sincerity;* through form and custom; when a mere compliment to the piety of those they ask; when done under pretence to humility; when only desire temporal blessings, averse to spiritual (1 Kings xiii. 6; Acts viii. 24). So also when public praise is returned for deliverances (Isa. xxvi. 16); yet no public glory for mercies (Luke xvii. 18).

2. When *they will not pray for themselves;* practically live without God, neglect public worship and secret devotion. Imagine that ministers' prayers more acceptable than their own. Not use proper means to obtain what they ask: health, prosperity, self-conquest.

3. When they *will not do what God by His word and ministers requireth.* Jews promised (vers. 5, 6); yet were resolutely determined on their course, contrary to command of God. Pharaoh (Exod. iv. 28). Men ask our prayers, but will not part with their lusts, nor practise duties as enjoined.

III. Show the hypocrisy and evil of this conduct.

1. It is a *high affront to the all-seeing and holy God.* It is mocking God (vers. 20, 22).

2. It is *deceiving and grieving to those friends* whose prayers they desire. They hope for the best; yet if discern insincerity they will have no heart to pray for you. In affliction, prayers sought; but neglect your intercessors and religion in your prosperity.

3. Prayers offered for such persons *are not likely to avail.* Margin reads, "You have used deceit against your own souls."

Servants in praying families, heed this. *Weak persons* who look to godly persons' prayers in their last moments (Prov. xxviii. 9). Holy men's prayers may secure a temporary good (Jas. v. 15), but ensure no lasting advantage; no salvation of the soul.

Application. — (1.) Learn with *what dispositions of mind we should desire the prayers* of others: in sincerity; concurring with them; ready to obey God (Ps. lxv. 2). (2.) That *we should be ready to pray one for another.* Our intercessions may bless; and we shall be blessed in return (Ps. xxxv. 13). (3.) It is particularly wicked to dissemble in our hearts *when we profess dependence on the intercession of Christ.* His intercession not intended to supersede our prayers (Rev. viii. 3; Heb. vii. 25). If you neglect prayer, or pray formally, or live in violation of His teachings, you offer indignity to His holy character and office of mediator.—*Abstract of Sermon by Rev. Job Orton, Kidderminster,* A.D. 1775.

Vers. 21, 22. *Theme:* ADMONISHED AND ABANDONED.

I. Wilful self-deceit. They *tried to beguile themselves* that they were acting religiously, and were ready to listen to God's word, and were doing what was pleasing to Him; while all the time they were *resolved to follow their own course,* yet hoped that *God would give approval to their rebellion.*

Like instances of self-deceit, Numb. xxii. 5, 19; Matt. xxiii. 11; Luke xviii. 11; and 1 Tim. iv. 2.

II. Given over to delusions. All further *counsels, persuasions, prayers* for you are *useless.* You both "*believe a* lie," and "*will have none of My reproof.*" For *such obstinacy* there is no cure; you must now be left to be "filled with the knowledge of your own devices."

CHAPTER XLIII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—**1. Chronology of the Chapter.**—Continuous with the preceding.

2. National Affairs.—The miserable "remnant" (vers. 5, 6) left by Nebuchadnezzar, now controlled by wilful men, were led away to Egypt, and reach Tahpanhes (ver. 7).

3. Contemporaneous History.—Probably, *in Egypt*, at this very time Pharaoh's palace was in course of erection; for the mention (ver. 9) of the "brick-kiln" and "clay" [*i.e.* mortar] "at the entry of Pharaoh's house" implies this. The deadly struggle between the Chaldeans, under Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and the Egyptians, under Pharaoh-Hophra, for ascendency in the East, was now at its fiercest heat. In ver. 10 the issue of the struggle is predicted; and Josephus states that *on the fifth year after the overthrow of Jerusalem*, Nebuchadnezzar, leaving the siege of Tyre, undertook his expedition to Egypt (*Antiq.* X. IX. 7).

4. Geographical References.—Ver. 7. "*Into the land of Egypt to Tahpanhes*," *vide* note, chap. ii. 16, *in loc.* This place, being on the frontier of Egypt towards Palestine, they naturally come to first.

Ver. 13. "*Beth-shemesh*," *i.e.* the house, or temple, of the Sun, known to us by its Greek name "*Heliopolis*," and in Hebrew by "*On*," a very ancient city of Egypt. It is situate on the east of the Nile, a few miles south of Memphis, *vide* note, chap. ii. 16, *in loc.* Ruins of its celebrated Temple of the Sun, and an obelisk, nearly seventy feet high, covered with hieroglyphics, still remain to mark its site.

5. Manners and Customs.—"*He shall spread his royal pavilion over them*," *i.e.* a *canopy*, which, being very ornate with gilt and gorgeous work, is described as a *glittering* canopy. Oriental monarchs have such an adorned parasol held over them for protection from the sun's rays.

Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 10. The word rendered "royal pavilion," שְׁפְרוֹ is from שָׁפַר, to be *polished, shining, beautiful.*

Ver. 12. "*I will kindle, and he shall burn them.*" The change of persons seems abrupt and "*he* shall kindle" seems better. The LXX., Syriac, and Vulgate so read; and the difference is effected by a transposition [possibly a penman's slip in the Hebrew] of the final letters, תִּצְתִּי for תִּצְתֵּי.

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER XLIII.

JEREMIAH CARRIED INTO EGYPT.

Vers. 1–6. *Theme:* WILFULNESS TAKING ITS OWN COURSE. See homilies on preceding chapter. In a wilful career—

I. Arrogance leads the way. All the "proud men" (ver. 2). *Pride* is the pioneer of *wilfulness;* and wilfulness leads on to rebellion against God.

II. Sinister unbelief comes to its aid. Baruch, being the younger man, naturally would protest more vehemently against their departure for Egypt. This the "proud men" interpret as betraying a preference for the Chaldeans. So they fortify their own self-will, and charge lies on God's servants in their own justification.

Notes.—*Henry* remarks: "Those that are resolved to contradict the great ends of the ministry, are industrious to bring a bad name upon it." And *Cramer:* "Observe the old diabolical trick; when preachers practise God's word and their office with zeal, the world understands how to conflict it with another name and call it *personal interest.*"

III. Impious disobedience *follows in its train.* "So all . . . *obeyed not the voice of the* Lord" (ver. 4), &c. Such defiance is the natural and necessary outgrowth of wilfulness.

IV. Overpowering force *completes its designs* (vers. 5, 6). No resisting its violence. The *good* in a man is compelled to yield as well as the *evil* in him; as here, *Jeremiah and Baruch* were carried off with the people. For when once Wilfulness becomes regnant, it overpowers the less vehement forces and bears all before it.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* PROUD MEN.

I. *Proud men are distinguished for their* disbelief of the Divine testimony.

1. Some deny the record God has given of *creation;* array geology against Moses.

2. Others disbelieve the record of *miracles,* on the plea that God never can depart from the great laws by which He governs the universe. Yet it is now a law that man comes into existence by

propagation, and as a babe; but it is certain that the *first* man did not come into being by propagation. Here, then, is action by God apart from law; and if one instance stands, so may all supernatural records.

3. Others disbelieve the record of *salvation by Jesus Christ;* call Christianity a myth; they will not bow to the Crucified One; will not admit their guilt, &c.

II. Proud men not only dishonour God by disbelieving His testimony, and thus *pave the way to their own destruction; they are* accessories to the ruin of others.

1. Others endorse their scepticism, imbibe their views, follow their example, and thus *perish through their misleading.*

2. *Pride* has prompted kings and potentates to all the sanguinary wars that have *desolated lands and homes.*

III. Pride being so hateful to God, He specially honours and approves humility.

1. Humility was the *garment in which Christ was arrayed* when He came into the world. "He took upon Him the form of a servant."

2. This adornment of Christ should be *the garment of Christians.* "Be clothed with humility."

3. Thus attired, *proud men may despise us.* But though they occupy high stations, "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be brought low," &c.

4. But while God resisteth the proud, He giveth grace to the humble. He who inhabits eternity has promised to dwell with the lowly. Thus attired, good men will esteem us, angels will look upon us with complacency, and God will crown us with His richest favour.—"*Walks with Jeremiah,*" *Rev. D. Pledge.*

Vers. 5–7. *Theme:* LIFE'S AIM DEFEATED. "So the captains took . . . *Jeremiah* and Baruch . . . into *the land of Egypt.*"

I. The ill most dreaded was eventually realised. Nothing could be more bitter to Jeremiah than this being carried at last to Egypt.

1. Throughout his whole prophetic career he had pleaded with his nation against looking towards Egypt for any befriending. It is the sum of his prophetic ministry: "*Go not into Egypt*" (ver. 2).

2. At the downfall of Jerusalem he had chosen to stay with the "remnant" in his own land, rather than go away into Chaldea; prompted thereto by a noble patriotism (chap. xl. 4–6).

3. The penalty of his faithful service of his country comes now in the most odious form it could assume, forced to go to the country from which he most instinctively recoils (vers. 6, 7).

Note.—How hard at times seems "*the irony of fate!*" as the worldly call it; but *the ordering of Providence!*

"Life's hopes o'erturned, its projects crossed!"

II. Godly men entailed in the calamities of impiety.

1. Their ministry for God and their people cruelly resisted and repudiated (ver. 2).

2. Their wise and self-sacrificing career contemned amid the excitement and passion of a popular caprice.

3. The very wrongs inflicted upon them which they most dread.

Notes.—(1.) How painful in *his old age* to be thus torn from the land he had so loved and heroically served!

(2.) After all his righteous denunciation of Egypt, and of his nation for turning thitherwards, how bitter this experience of being *forced to go thither!*

(3.) If he *must* go from his own land, he had opportunity of going amid honours, and where he would have received kindness (chap. xl. 4), and where he could have served God amid the worthier part of his nation.

III. Life's painful frustrations.

1. Surely after such a faithful career of service for God, Jeremiah deserved a kindlier end than this!

2. It strangely baffles our faith when all our hopes and aims, which we *know to be right,* are thus defeated.

3. Certainly if life's services were only rewarded on earth, we should see most grievous failures of justice.

4. A sorrowful career, such as Jere-

miah's, closing in deepest shadows of disappointment and defeat, surely predicts a brighter world.

> "To steel his melting heart,
> To act the martyr's sternest part;
> To watch with firm, unshrinking eye
> His darling visions as they die.
> Too happy if, that dreadful day,
> His life be given him for a prey."
> (See Keble's "Christian Year.")

Vers. 7–13. *Theme:* FLEEING FROM GOD'S CONTROL. "So they came into the land of Egypt."

I. Allured thither by delusions (chap. xlii. 14).

II. Defiant of Jehovah's counsels (chap. xliii. 4).

III. Choosing for themselves a refuge egardless of God (ver. 7).

IV. Followed by the denunciations f offended justice (vers. 8–10).

V. Overtaken at last by the foe rom whom they fled (vers. 10–13).

Note.—"The ways of the Lord" (says Lange) "are wonderful. Israel flies from *Nebuchadnezzar* far away to Egypt. But there they are not safe. The Lord causes it to be proclaimed to them that, at the entrance of the king's palace at Tahpanhes, Nebuchadnezzar's tent shall stand. Now, indeed, there is a brick-kiln there, in the clay of which Jeremiah is to place foundation-stones, as it were, for the Chaldean king's palace. Thus the Lord *lays the germs of future events*, and whatever He prepares in secret He reveals in His own time, to the glory of His wisdom, omniscience, and omnipotence."

Ver. 12. "KINDLE A FIRE IN THE HOUSES OF THE GODS OF EGYPT." Egypt was full of temples and idol-gods; those of wood the conquering army would commit to the flames; those of gold they would carry away as spoil to Babylon.

This burning of temples and idols by Nebuchadnezzar, and afterwards by the Persian kings, was mercifully ordered by God to wean the exiles there from their idolatry into which they sank, and to revive their faith in the God of Israel.

"ARRAY HIMSELF WITH THE LAND OF EGYPT." A bold figure. The king of Babylon, from whom you expect to escape by fleeing to Egypt, where you hope to dwell securely and peacefully (chap. xlii. 11, 14), will come; and *with the same ease* as a shepherd wraps himself about in his mantle, *in order to lay quietly down in it and take his rest*, so will Nebuchadnezzar possess himself of the land.

The Egyptians, according to the Arabs, have a tradition that their land was devastated by Nebuchadnezzar *in consequence of their king having received the Jews under his protection*, and that it lay desolate forty years.

PROPHECY FULFILLED.

Note.—I. This is definite prophecy (vers. 10-13). *The name of the invader* is given; his work of spoliation is described. God's predictions are not generalisations or conjectures; but *explicit fore-statements of events*. This prophecy by *Jeremiah in Egypt* was *echoed* (*without collusion*) by *Ezekiel in Babylon* by the river Chebar (Ezek. xxix.–xxxvii.)

II. Predictions literally accomplished. The *historian* follows with his pen long after the prophet has written his predictions; and in *Josephus* we have impartial testimony. He writes: "Which things came to pass accordingly; for on the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the twenty-third of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he made an expedition into Cœle-Syria; . . . and *fell upon Egypt*, in order to overthrow it; and he slew the king that then reigned, and set up another; and he took those Jews, that were there captives, and led them away to Babylon" (*Antiq. X.* ix. 7).

CHAPTER XLIV.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. **Chronology of the Chapter.**—A considerable interval must be placed between this chapter and the two preceding, which record their arrival in Egypt; for we here find the fugitives coming together to Pathros from their different towns, so that we have to allow time for their dispersion through Egypt and settlement in widely separated cities there. Yet the address of Jeremiah assumes that he speaks to the people of the migration who have *come* into Egypt, and not to a later generation *born* in Egypt. Dr. Payne Smith puts the incident only a *year* after their arrival in Egypt, but this seems too early; and it may be nearer the case to conjecture the date as being from five to ten years after the flight into Egypt, probably about 580 B.C., though Lange suggests 510 B.C. See Introduction, p. 2, V. c.

2. **Contemporaneous Scriptures.**—*Ezekiel's* visions in Babylon are synchronous. See also Psalm cxxxvii. *Daniel* also in Babylon (see chaps. iii., iv.) *Obadiah* also rises at this time in prophecy, denouncing Edom for its exultation over Zion's overthrow.

3. **Geographical References.**—Ver. 1. "*Migdol*," meaning "a tower," a boundary city in the north of Egypt, now *Magdolum*, twelve miles from Pelusium. "*Tahpanhes*," note on chap. xliii. 8, and "*Noph*," note on chap. ii. 16. *Pathros*, *i.e.* Upper Egypt (see Ezek. xxix. 14).

4. **Personal Allusion.**—Ver. 30. PHARAOH-HOPHRA, *vide* Contemporaneous History, note to chap. xxxii. *Hophra*, known to the Greeks as Apries, succeeded Psammis, the successor to Pharaoh-Necho, whom Nebuchadnezzar defeated at Charchemish. *Vide* "Extermination of Jewish Exiles in Egypt," below, p. 620.

Ver. 19. "*The Queen of Heaven.*" *Vide* note *in loc.* vii. 18.

5. **Literary Criticisms.**—Ver. 9. "*The wickedness of your wives.*" As the Hebrew suffix is singular, נְשֵׁיהֶם, the LXX. alter the word and give "*your princes.*" But Henderson, Keil, Naegelsbach, and others would retain the word as referring to the Jewish queens, who were abettors of idolatry (1 Kings xi. 1–8, xv. 13), and take the singular suffix in a collective sense.

Ver. 10. "*Not humbled*," lit. "broken" (as Isa. xix. 10) or bruised" (Isa. liii. 5).

Ver. 14. "*They have a desire to return*," i.e. *are lifting up their souls to return* to Judah. *Vide* Literary Criticisms, xxii. 27.

Ver. 19. "*To worship her*," *i.e.* the Queen of Heaven. The *Hiph.* of נסך. In the *Piel* form (Job x. 8) the word is rendered by the meaning to *fashion*, *shape*. The meaning is similar here, *to represent her*; the cakes being made in the form of a crescent to represent the moon. "*Without our men*," *i.e.* our *husbands*.

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER XLIV.

JEWISH IDOLATRY IN EGYPT.

OCCASION OF THE IDOLATROUS ASSEMBLY. There had gathered together at Pathros "*a great multitude*" of the Jews resident in Egypt.

I. It was a public festival in honour of Astarte, *the* "*Queen of Heaven*" (ver. 17); and libations are being offered to her in accordance with a *vow* the worshippers had made, "*Do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our mouth.*" This is the usual phrase for a vow (Numb. xxx. 2, 12; Judg. xi. 36). They had, therefore, bound themselves to this public homage of the queen of heaven, and were now intent upon carrying out the special object which brought them together (see ver. 25: "*Our vows that we have vowed*," &c.)

II. *It was* to an assembly of women *that the prophet spake.* For this "great multitude" is literally a *great kahal*, or congregation gathered for a religious purpose; and "except for such a purpose Jewish manners would not allow the women to be abroad in crowds" (Dr. Payne Smith). The women are now the *speakers*, replying to Jeremiah's protest (see ver. 19, "*without our men*," i.e., *husbands*).

III. The men, however, though excluded from such an assembly, knew what their wives and daughters were doing (ver. 15). Though they do not engage in this service of homage to the Queen of Heaven, they sympathise with and favour it; for they have *come with the women* to Pathros, thus sanctioning the occasion of their assembling.

IV. The festival observances consisted of fragrant *incense burnt* upon an altar, and *libations poured out* "unto her" (ver. 17), possibly *before* some image or representation of Astarte, and *cakes made* (either to be *burnt* or *eaten*) which were

shaped like the crescent of the moon. Before this altar, and perhaps also image, of the moon-goddess the *women advanced and passed in regular procession, chanting* as they came, and *reciting the benefits* they had received from the hands of the goddess they adored (ver. 17).

V. The infatuation of these idolatrous worshippers. This adoration of Astarte was rife (ver. 17) when Josiah ascended the throne; its suppression by Josiah was regarded with much secret ill-will. In Jehoiakim's reign the people hastened back to their idolatry (see note, *National History*, to chap. vii. p. 143; and homily on *Section* 16–20, p. 147; also on vers. 17, 18, p. 158, 159). Zedekiah prohibited this form of worship during the miseries of his reign. The people now, from amid Egyptian scenes, look back over the history of their national misfortunes and *ascribe them all to their neglect of this goddess* (ver. 18).

VI. Specious excuses offered in extenuation of their apostasy. Several pleas are urged:—1. *Their vows must be fulfilled* (ver. 17); and this pledge they dare not violate, for that would entail the anger of Astarte. 2. *Their idolatry had the sanction of national custom* in the days gone by; for their ancestors had practised it generally and publicly with the sanction of their kings and princes (ver. 17). 3. *It had entailed no calamity* (ver. 18); for they persist in ignoring their *wickedness* (ver. 9) as the cause of their distresses, and now ascribe calamity to their neglect of this goddess. 4. These female worshippers of Astarte *had the authority and protection of their husbands* in their idolatry (ver. 19). Without the consent of their husbands the vows of women are not binding (Numb. xxx. 7, 8); but as "our men" support us in these obligations to Astarte, we, their wives and daughters, are blameless and irreproachable. Thus they desire to shield themselves under the complicity of others.

AN INDIGNANT PROTEST AGAINST APOSTASY. Delivered amid the idol-scenes of Egypt, and to the assembly of Jewish apostates.

I. A bold and vehement expostulation. Jeremiah stops the procession of the women, and the festival of Astarte, to pronounce against it in the name of God. The prophet was undeterred by the violence he had endured at the hands of his nation, who had dragged him away into Egypt, but *fearlessly rebuked their apostasy* from God for the idolatries of Egypt (ver. 8). In this earnest remonstrance he declares —(*a.*) *that the existing desolation and ruin of Judea were the evil consequences of their own past wickedness in apostatising from Jehovah* (vers. 2–7); and (*b.*) *that for them to continue such idolatries in Egypt would certainly entail destruction and ruin upon themselves* (vers. 8–14). If God had not spared "Jerusalem" (ver. 2), the holy city, where He had made His name to dwell, and which He loved, will He, think you, spare Egypt—a scene He *loathes?* (ver. 8). And he heaps maledictions upon them—(*a.*) for their *needless and voluntary and wilful departure into Egypt* (ver. 8), "whither ye be gone to dwell"—not carried by force as your brethren in Babylon; and now (*b.*) *for their flagrant insult of Jehovah's honour before the very eyes of the heathen*, "burning incense to other gods in *the land of Egypt*" (ver. 8). For this their aggravating guilt, he declares their sure and terrible extermination (vers. 11–14).

II. Wilful refusal of the prophetic admonition. Here the men join the women in loud and obstinate rejection of God's word (vers. 15, 16). (*a.*) *They implicitly acknowledge that this solemn protest* of the prophet *is Jehovah's word* (ver. 16); (*b.*) but *insist that the happiest days of their nation were associated with Astarte's worship* (ver. 17): (*c.*) *that the favour of the Queen of Heaven guarantees more advantages than the worship of Jehovah* (vers. 18, 19). It was thus a declaration of—(1.) *Absolute faith in other gods; Polytheism*, therefore. (2.) *Preference for and a higher esteem of Astarte;* which means *abandonment of Jehovah* as their national God. (3.) *Indifference to all Jehovah's displeasure and threatenings;* they were better off, with His anger, in Astarte's favour, for the Queen of Heaven

was certainly more benign, whereas Jehovah's protection had been of little good to them.

III. Refutation of popular fallacies and announcement of certain doom. Taking up the *facts* of their *national misery* and final *expatriation*, Jeremiah shows —(*a.*) That, though they played an idolatrous part in their own land, *their idols had not preserved them from national destruction;* for "your land is a desolation," &c. (ver. 22). (*b.*) That *their deeds of flagrant apostasy went up before God as a memorial and witness against them* for their ingratitude and faithlessness (ver. 23); for He had established and honoured them as a nation by giving them "His law, His statutes, and His testimonies" (ver. 23). (*c.*) That because of their "evil doings and abominations" (ver. 22) *God could no longer hold back the doom which at last overwhelmed the land and the people* (vers. 22, 23).

Then GOD ABANDONS THEM FOR EVER. (1.) They had *allied themselves by vows to an idol* (ver. 25), and resolutely kept their vows of allegiance though God pleaded with them (ver. 16). (2.) The *Most High therefore divorces them from Himself by solemn oath* (ver. 26), and breaks His covenant with them as His people. (3.) Declares that He will *no longer extend His protection over them, but will be their enemy* (vers. 27, 28); and (4.) *Gives them an ominous sign* (in predicting the fate of their Egyptian king) *of the certainty that He will avenge on them the insult* of their open rejection of Him (vers. 29, 30), and which will convince them that *it is the hand of the God they have insulted* which chastises them for their guilt.

THE FINAL WORD OF WOE: JEREMIAH'S FAREWELL PROPHECY.

I. A long and painful ministry, closing amid saddest circumstances. See Introduction, V., *Length of his Official Ministry*, p. 2. Could any facts be wanting to complete the melancholy surroundings? (*a.*) *His pleadings and warnings against a fatal national policy* in trusting to Egypt, all *unheeded.* (*b.*) *His nation vanquished and scattered;* some in Babylon, others in Egypt. (*c.*) *Jerusalem destroyed, God's temple in ruins, the land given up to execration* (ver. 22). (*d.*) *Himself, an old and forlorn prophet, amid aliens*, and even more alien fellow-countrymen. (*e.*) *His people sunk into lower depths of iniquity* than during his entire career; and now at last absolutely repudiating Jehovah as the object of their worship and obedience.

II. A brave and heroic career, shining out lustrously to the end. For over fifty years he had been God's messenger to this hardened people. He had suffered much at their hands; yet, undaunted till the last, and now at so great an age, between seventy and eighty years old, lifting up his voice in fearless protestation and fervent pleadings amid the people whom he had sought to keep faithful to God. His last outcry is full of grand prophetic power.

III. A lifelong witness against sinners, ending amid signs of fruitlessness and defeat. Not one feature of hope illumines the dense darkness and poignant melancholy of this last sight of Jeremiah. Every view looks mournful and piteous. (*a.*) *No good seems to have resulted from all his earnest, prolonged, faithful, and self-sacrificing work.* (*b.*) *No prospect opens as a relief* to the desolate retrospect. The sun sinks before him amid portending tempests of terror and woe. The *Christian tradition* respecting *his death* is that he was stoned to death at Tahpanhes by his own countrymen! Another tradition is that he escaped to Babylon. But no star rises on the dark night. This chapter gives the farewell glance at the hoary prophet; and his last utterance is one of severest gloom.

Note.—In 2 Maccabees i. and ii., there is a most interesting story of Jeremiah hiding the sacred fire, the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, and the Altar of incense in a cave in Mount Nebo *previous to his leaving Judea*, where, says the record, they remain to this day, nor will be discovered *until God collects Israel together again.*

EXTERMINATION OF THE JEWISH EXILES IN EGYPT.

I. Of their total extinction in Egypt they had been solemnly forewarned (chap. xlii. 15–18). Their presence in Egypt, therefore, invited the punishment.

II. Their open abandonment of Jehovah now as their God added the fatal element to their rebellion (vers. 16, 17).

III. God's awful farewell to these guilty people *is taken under the solemnity of an oath*, as indicating its irrevocableness (ver. 26).

IV. Their absolute extermination, *Jehovah will see to it that it is effected* (ver. 27).

THE EXTERMINATION ACCOMPLISHED. Their asylum proved no shelter from the pursuing vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar.

I. The "sign" *by which they should realise God's destructive judgments.* Pharaoh-Hophra, when defeated in battle by the Cyrenians, became regarded with suspicion as having betrayed his native troops for selfish ends, and hence a revolt arose. Amasis, whom Hophra sent to treat with these mutinous troops, himself went over to the rebels. Hophra, gathering an army of foreign auxiliaries, now fought against Amasis and the Egyptian troops, but was defeated and taken captive. After treating him kindly for some years, Amasis, because the Egyptians regarded this indulgence with ill-favour, surrendered Hophra to his enemies, by whom he was strangled. He came to the throne a year before the Jewish migration to Egypt, and continued king for eighteen years after, although his last ten years were spent a prisoner in his palace at Saïr. This civil war of Amasis with Hophra opened the way for Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt in the twenty-third year of his reign.

II. The total extermination of the Jewish refugees in Egypt. A thousand years before God had led forth His people from Egypt with a mighty hand, and planted them in Zion; but Israel had failed of her mission; and now these most arrant rebels shall utterly perish in this land of Egypt, where they boasted they could find safe asylum (chap. xlii. 14), abandoned and disowned by God (chap. xliv. 26), exterminated by the rage of the king of Babylon, from whom they sought refuge in Egypt, but who *avenged himself upon them there with merciless wrath* (ver. 12).

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XLIV.

Vers. 2–13. *Theme:* GOD'S APPEAL AGAINST JUDAH. In this wretched "remnant" the old root of disobedience and unbelief remains still.

I. A mirror of the stubborn heart of man.

1. *Unceasingly warned.* For centuries (ver. 10).

2. *Faithfully and impassionedly warned* (ver. 3). By words of thunder and strokes of power. Think only of Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, Isaiah, &c.

II. The judgment of just love executed.

1. *All reforming and redeeming agencies failed.* Judah hardened his stubborn neck (vers. 5, 10).

2. *Long-suffering love became exhausted,* and there remained nothing but the doom which outraged mercy demanded (vers. 6–13). Compare *Naegelsbach.*

Ver. 4. *Theme:* GOD HATES SIN. "Oh, do not the abominable thing which I hate."

God speaks these words *of wickedness.* All sin is in principle *idolatry;* the sinner leaves the true God, and pays homage to some idol.

He who searches the heart may see *now* that there is some "abominable thing" upon which you are intent—planned during the week, resolved upon. But the Almighty One stoops to beseech you, "Oh, do not," &c. Do not pass this message of God on to another fellow-hearer; *your* sin is "the abominable thing."

God hates sin; **so hates it in all its**

forms—as a principle, an act, a course of life, that it is an "abominable thing."

Why does He hate it? He hates nothing He has made. Many things you dislike He does not dislike—the reptile, &c.; but the one thing He hates is a thing He has not made; it is a thing the *creature has made*, not the *Creator*.

I. Let us inquire what sin is. Violation of God's law (1 John iii. 4). Doing what God forbids; or not doing what He commands. To *love*, both God and our neighbour, is the fulfilling of the law (Matt. xxii. 36–40). Right conduct, without love, is therefore sin. He hates it—

1. Because *it is contrary to His own nature*. "Holy is the Lord God."

2. Because *sin is unnatural in His creatures*. It is no part of the human constitution, but a foreign element.

3. Because *sin transgresses holy, just, and good laws*. Not of some arbitrary commandment.

4. Because *it defiles and injures the entire human nature*. It pollutes what should be pure; blasts and blights.

5. Because *it makes men curses to each other*. What has changed children into profligates, mothers into brutes, fathers into beasts of prey? Do not wonder God says, "I hate it."

6. Because *it ignores, or rejects, the Divine government*. And no government is so paternal, tender, and beneficent as God's.

7. Because *wherever sin exists, except it is checked by God's mercy, it has the dominion*. A cruel tyrant!

8. Because *where it is introduced it spreads*. In every clime; through every race; through every grade of society; a deadly pestilence.

9. Because *sin requires God to inflict upon men*, of every class and kind, that which He assures us upon His oath *He has no pleasure in*.

10. Because *continuing in sin, while hearing the Gospel, tramples under foot the blood of Jesus*.

II. Hear, then, God's entreaty: "Do it not!"

1. What are you going to do? *Persist in it?* Think! Do you really mean to go on sinning in the face of such a message? With conscience smarting, memory weighted, remorse springing up in your soul like a tempest, with a fearful looking-for of judgment, with your miserable convictions and bitter tears, your gloomy forebodings and knowledge of penalties, are you *determined to continue?*

2. *Then there can be but little hope*, if this state of heart continue, concerning you. You may live, with a seared conscience, until you lay down on the bed of death; and there perhaps all your old fears will be awakened—when it is too late! Then, as you sink down into perdition, the millstone about your neck will be "*the abominable thing which God hates.*"—*Rev. Samuel Martin* (Westminster), 1858 A.D.

Ver. 4. *Theme:* THE ABOMINABLE NATURE OF SIN. "Howbeit I sent unto you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

No man can think his guilt too great. We may confine our views to sin and exclude mercy, but we cannot overrate guilt. God long laboured in vain with the Jews, and at length Nebuchadnezzar carried the mass of them to Babylon. Jeremiah took the remnant to Egypt. While there he spoke to them the words of the text. The "abominable thing" was their idolatry; the same may be said of all sin. Sin is the "abominable thing" God hates. This appears—

I. From the nature of things. Sin is opposed to the wishes and designs of God. "God is love," and His object is to raise all creatures to highest eternal happiness. They must therefore have the same love He possesses, and own Him for their Head, His law being their standard.

1. *Sin sets up private interest against public good*. The root of sin is self-love, and out of it arise all evil passions that hurry men and devils into evil against Heaven. Sin is the transgression of the law. And this being its nature, *makes it the enemy of happiness*. The Friend and Guardian of the universe hates and must punish sin. Love abominates it.

2. *Sin opposes God in all good for His creatures;* it resists all His loving purposes. That He does hate sin we see—

II. From His expressions of abhorrence.

1. *In the penalty annexed to His law,* the eternal exclusion from good, and eternal endurance of evil. This endless evil is the measure of God's hatred of sin.

2. *In His providential government.* When angels sinned, not all God's love nor their dignity could save them. When Adam and Eve sinned they were turned out of Eden. The Flood swept the world when it was filled with violence. For sin Egypt was lashed with ten plagues, and her king found a watery grave. And when Israel sinned, God brought upon them fiery serpents and fire from heaven; the ground opened and swallowed them up; and while they possessed the promised land His providence was a constant remembrancer of His hatred of sin. God's anger against sin destroyed Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Edom, Moab, and the Philistines.

(*a.*) *All human suffering and death express God's anger against sin.* Sinners will be punished according to their guilt.

(*b.*) *What strength of that abhorrence of sin is uttered in the cry,* "Oh, do not this abominable thing," &c.!

(*c.*) *Yet one exhibition of God's anger against sin is more amazing than the rest.* For us God spared not His own Son, and will He then, O sinner, spare thee?

Who are sinners? "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And, moreover, all are under the entire dominion of sin. "God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of" man's "heart was only evil continually." As is the fountain, so are the streams. Words and actions of the natural man are but sin.

III. Considering God's abhorrence of sin, how astonishing His long forbearance, and how wonderful "the love of God which passeth knowledge"!

1. *We have cause for humility.* Self-importance and conscious worth are unbecoming. How fearful would have been our condition had not the Son of God left His glory to save us! We needed a Divine Saviour. Let us hide ourselves in His righteousness.

2. *For sinners abhorred of God this is our only remedy.* For many years God has pleaded, "Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate." Do not re-enact the rebellion of the Jews. Remember it is written, "Because I called and ye refused. I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Seize the offered blessing now, ere God says, "*Ye shall not* see My rest."—*Rev. Edward Griffin, D.D.*

Theme: SINNERS: A WARNING. "*Have ye forgotten the wickedness,*" &c.

I. Guilty careers offer a melancholy admonition to others.

II. Examples of ruin should deter us from sin.

III. Reckless indifference to the careers and penalties of sinners shows the most obdurate and hopeless impiety.

1. *Beyond reformation* (Prov. xxvii. 22).

2. *Dead to all saving influences* (Prov. xxv. 20).

Ver. 17. *Theme:* SELF-VINDICATING SINNERS. No one would perhaps justify these people; yet thousands will *justify themselves!*

I. Criminal impiety.

1. *Their voluntary engagements.* Johanan had inclined to hide in Egypt from Nebuchadnezzar, but sought God's direction; pledging themselves, from the least to the greatest, to obey His voice (chap. xlii. 1–6). Instead of fulfilling their engagements—

2. *Their deliberate violation of them.* God warned them (chap. xlii. 13–17); but they charge Baruch with feigning this message (chap. xliii. 1–4), and followed their own course.

3. *Their self-vindicating effrontery.* The people betook themselves to idolatry in Egypt. Being reproved, they boldly asserted that Jehovah's worship had been profitless, and that the Queen of Heaven had proved their benefactress. So they would worship her, whatever God or His prophet might say (vers. 17–19).

II. Modern repetitions.

1. *The profane sinner.* See his engagements in baptism and confirmation! Yet millions repudiate their engagements, and vindicate their evil ways.

2. *The self-righteous formalist.* Hear him joining in the liturgy as a "penitent sinner;" yet tell him in private what a sinner he is, what duties should follow from penitence, how he should cleave humbly to Jesus Christ, and he repudiates it all.

3. *The hypocritical professor.* He finds excuses for his sin, "turns the grace of God into lasciviousness."

III. Certain issues. God told these Jews, who defied His judgments, *that they should see whose words should stand, His or theirs* (ver. 28).

1. How did it fare with them? (vers. 12–14, 29, 30.)

2. How shall it fare with you? (Luke xix. 27.) Address—

(*a.*) Those who *disregard our testimony.* "In the day that God shall visit for sin, ye shall be cast down and perish" (vers. 15–17).

(*b.*) Those who *tremble at the word of God.* That is the state of mind becoming to every sinner (Isa. lxvi. 2). Cultivate it, and then pay to God your vows. —*Charles Simeon, M.A.*, 1828.

Theme: THE ADVANTAGES OF IRRELIGION! "For then had we plenty of bread, and were well, and saw no evil."

No doubt there are times when the wicked prosper. Because of this it is too often thought that "godliness is (*not*) profitable for the life which now is," &c. It was so with these idolaters (vers. 17, 18). They argued that because they had more of this world's comforts when living in idolatry, that therefore it was more advantageous than the worship of the true God.

I. Consider that God does not enter into judgment with wrongdoers immediately and forthwith, but reserves His displeasure. Punishment does not follow instantly upon transgression. Sinners may "see no evil" at the time of sinning; yet *God's displeasure is kindled by it*, and will one day burst upon them. Sin never goes unpunished.

II. God does not connive at sin *because He allows it to be committed at the time* with impunity. Though they enjoyed abundance, and "saw no evil" at the time of their idolatry, yet now they were smarting under the penalties. "*Because* ye burned incense, and *because* ye sinned, *therefore* this evil happened unto you as at *this day.*"

Even though no manifestation of Divine displeasure comes during the commission of sin, God is assuredly displeased. And though during a course of iniquity there is no lack of life's good things, yet iniquity is not profitable. The day of recompense will come.

III. As with these Jews it seemed better for them, in a worldly sense, when they lived in idolatry than when they abandoned it, so it sometimes appears to have been better with the sinner, in a worldly sense, when he lived in sin *than when he became converted by God's grace* and professed Christianity. In early Christian times the profession of Christianity involved "the loss of all things," but higher blessings more than compensated these worldly sacrifices. "No man hath left houses . . . for My sake, but *shall receive manifold more,*" &c. But though nothing was gained in this life; suppose that "since we left off" (ver. 18) our worldly and evil ways we only suffered misfortunes, yet what an *ample compensation in the life to come!*

IV. But experience testifies that more is gained by religion than lost. If a Christian lose the favour of man, he wins the favour of God; if he lose the "pleasures of sin," he gains the joys of salvation. Let not good men, however great their privations, look back on their days of sin and lament, "*Then had we plenty,*" &c., as if the former days were better than these. Rather rejoice that, however poor they be, they are "rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom," that "all things are theirs, things present and things to come."

V. Gaze not with envious eyes on the prosperity of the wicked. O men of God, look not back on the flesh-pots of Egypt, or the rewards of sin

By a holy content and joy in God let it be seen in you that—

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before you reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."

—"*Walks*," &c., *Rev. D. Pledge.*

Ver. 25. *Theme:* KEEPING UNHOLY VOWS.

I. *Conscientiousness in wrongdoing.* Must keep *vows!*

II. *Defiance of solemn prohibition.* Idol worship!

III. *Subtlety of self-delusion.* Vows are too solemn to be broken!

IV. *Flattery of spiritual infatuation.* It is good for us to be faithful.

V. *God's law disobeyed in self-justification.* Though God forbids, we are bound to "*fulfil with the hand*" our vows.

A SUPERSTITIOUS REGARD FOR VOWS. That they are inviolable, and should be sacredly fulfilled. But—

i. *To cling to our vows when they are evidently unwise or ungodly* is criminal.

ii. *To fulfil our rash vows in proof that we are not fickle*, is to add reckless deeds to reckless words.

iii. *To persist in our vows when shown they break God's laws* is defiant obstinacy; substituting constancy to our words for obedience to God's word.

iv. *To retract wicked vows is the highest proof of wisdom and piety.* Better break our words than provoke God's wrath. Think of *Herod's vow*, leading to *murder!*

Ver. 25. *Theme:* OBSTINACY. "We will surely perform our vows."

I. *Resisting admonition* (ver. 16).

II. *Blinded by false judgment* (vers. 17, 18).

III. *Wilful persistency* (ver. 25).

IV. *More obdurate as it continues.*

Ver. 26. *Theme:* FINALLY ABANDONED BY GOD. "Since ye will not hear Me speaking and warning, hear Me *swearing*—'*By my great name*,'" &c. —*Jamieson.*

"God will have the last word; the prophets may be run down, but God cannot."—*Henry.*

This is the severest punishment, when God takes away His holy name and word.

I. In what it consists. That the Lord removes the candlestick of His word from among His people; *i.e.*, by depriving them of the means of grace He *brings Himself into forgetfulness* amongst them.

II. On what it is founded. That this people, on their part, *have striven to forget God.*

III. What is its effect? The people given up *to the powers of evil*, for their complete destruction.—*Naegelsbach.*

Note.—"The Jews, heretofore, amidst all their idolatry, had retained the form of appeal to the name of God and the law, the distinctive glory of their nation; *God will allow this no more* (Exod. xx. 29): there shall be left none there to profane His name thus any more."—*Jamieson.*

Ver. 29. *Theme:* ONE SINNER "A SIGN" TO MANY. In *naming* to this audience the then powerful Egyptian king, "Hophra," Jeremiah exposed himself to greatest hazards. For the audience he addressed were all hostile to the prophet and his mission. Had any of Jeremiah's hearers reported this daring utterance to the king himself, it would have insured the prophet's swift doom. Yet God's messenger dares to witness even against powerful kings, unterrified by danger, content to speak what God speaks in him. God *names* "Hophra" in this prediction; for He deals with men *individually;* has the fate of each in His hands; and "none shall stay His hand."

I. "A sign" given as a premonition of coming judgments.

1. Signs given *before events* were intended to prepare the mind for events hereafter, and to fortify against doubt. Thus with Gideon's fleece (Judg. vi. 36–40).

2. Signs placed *in the future*, and to be waited for, were intended to keep the mind expectant and trustful. Thus with the sign to Moses (Exod. iii. 12), the event convinced them that God's

hand had wrought it, and called up their gratitude to Him.

3. This sign was thus prospective; buried for a time, but in due course it would rise into realisation, and its value would be—

(*a.*) In *vindicating Jeremiah as being truly God's spokesman.*

(*b.*) As *proving that God's Mighty Hand was working.*

(*c.*) As *refuting their boasted trust in the security of Egypt.*

(*d.*) As *an announcement of the utter ruin of this rebellious people of which that sign was the forerunner.*

II. A sign fulfilled guarantees accomplishment of the truth it forewarned.

1. *The event seemed unlikely of fulfilment.* For Apries (Pharaoh-Hophra) now flourished in great prosperity and power (so Herodotus records). Indeed he vaunted impiously that "no God has power to dethrone me." But he was defeated by the rebel Amasis, and strangled by his own subjects. This Hophra became (what he was afterwards titled on Egyptian monuments) "hated" by his own nation; and this was only (according to Herodotus) satiated by Amasis giving him up to the people for a violent and degrading death. Hophra's death occurred *eighteen years after the burning of Jerusalem* by the Chaldeans. (See "*Extermination of Exiles*," p. 620.) Many of these Jews would live to see this sign fulfilled.

2. *The sign pledged the fate of these exiles.* They vaunted their safety, as Hophra vaunted his power. They deemed their shelter in Egypt impregnable, and the shield of Pharaoh over them a sure protection; but Hophra should be "given into the hand of them that seek his life," and so should they also perish. His fall should announce theirs.

Note:—

1. When *God's anger overtakes one man*, it pledges the equal certainty of judgment *on all who are alike guilty.*

2. Fulfilled judgments in history, in the *destruction of cities* (Egypt, Nineveh, Jerusalem), and *of nations* (Israel, &c.), and of *individuals* (Nebuchadnezzar's madness, Zedekiah's fate), are all *witnesses to the sure doom of sinners.*

3. *Hopeless deathbed scenes* are a warning against those who neglect salvation.

4. *Fatal and sudden accidents* admonish those who reckon on years of opportunity.

5. *The visions of torment*, in Christ's parable of the rich man and in the Revelation, warn us to "*flee from the wrath to come.*"

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 1–6).

CHAPTER XLV.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—Chronology of the Chapter.—Immediately upon his having written the roll which was afterwards read to, and destroyed by, Jehoiakim (*vide* notes on chap. xxxvi.); eighteen years before Jerusalem was taken.

Literary Criticism.—Ver. 4. "*Even this whole land.*" Perhaps אֶרֶץ here may wisely be rendered "earth," rather than limited to the "land" of Israel; for Nebuchadnezzar's invasions and conquests were at that time disturbing, not Judea alone, but the known world (see chap. xxv. 26). Albeit the force of the statement here is emphatic respecting Judea, that as the whole country is under doom, no single individual should be selfishly craving his own aggrandisement, but accept a share in the common distress.

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER XLV.

BARUCH CORRECTED AND COMFORTED.

I. What can be gleaned respecting Baruch's disposition and character?

(*a.*) *A skilful scholar*, and therefore selected by Jeremiah as his amanuensis (Joseph., *Antiq. X.* ix. 1).

(*b.*) *Faithful in his attachment as a friend* (chap. xxxii. 12; xxxvi. 4 *et seq.*)

(*c.*) *Possessed of an ambitious temperament* (ver. 5), doubtless his noble lineage (li. 59; Joseph., *Antiq. X.* vi. 2;

lx. 1), as the grandson of Maasiah, in Josiah's time (2 Chron. xxxiv. 8), animated him with hopes of *high office in the state;* or his close association with the prophet fostered the expectation of becoming Jeremiah's successor in *the prophetic calling.*

(*d.*) These *youthful aspirations* (for he was young at this period, eighteen years before Jerusalem was captured), when wisely corrected (as in ver. 5), did not alienate his attachment to the prophet, nor render him less zealous in serving him.

(*e.*) Nevertheless he exhibits *wounded self-concern,* which shows a lack of devoted patriotism and abandonment of self for the nation's spiritual good. His words (ver. 3) "Woe is *me now!*" indicate this *self-concern as unduly prominent,* especially at such a crisis.

Oriental tradition exhibits Baruch as *offended at being denied the gift of prophecy;* of disappointment over the destruction of Jerusalem, and, with it, *his hopes of honourable position;* that therefore he apostatised from Judaism and adopted the tenets of Zoroaster (Dr. Payne Smith). This is not credible.

II. What is the burden here of Baruch's discontent and complaint?

(*a.*) *An unpatriotic self-concern* (comp. (*e.*) above). As he writes out the gloomy predictions of Jeremiah he is overpowered with a feeling of deep distress; but on what account? That *his city and people* were to experience such disaster? No! but that *he himself was to suffer.* "Woe is *me* now, for the Lord hath added grief," &c.

(*b.*) *An undevout repining against God* for His dealings with him (ver. 3). "The Lord hath *added* grief," &c. Rescued from the perils of my first writing (chap. xxxvi. 26), I am *again involved* in a similar peril. He lacks hardihood, and a spirit of glad obedience.

(*c.*) *An inconsolable despondency.* "I fainted in my sighing, and *I find no rest.*" Instead of realising his privilege of being *allied with God's prophet in God's service,* he murmurs. Instead of *hiding in God's love and care* amid anticipated distresses, he despairs!

(*d.*) *Impatience or distress over his nation's sinfulness,* which necessitates these gloomy prophecies of ruin. But it is not for *him* to be angry, but *pitiful* and *prayerful.*

III. What correction does God address to this complaining and aspiring youth?

(*a.*) *Specific information of God's absolute purpose of overthrow for Judah* (ver. 4). So that for him to—

1. *Fret over Judah's overthrow,* is to repine against God's designs.

2. *Deplore his own misfortunes,* is to reflect on God's justice and wisdom in allowing *him* to be involved in his nation's distresses.

3. *Abandon all comfort,* is to forget that God, who punishes evil, can also care for those He cherishes.

We must *recognise and accept God's law of justice.* It behoves us to check all repining at His judgments. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." "Just and true are Thy ways, O King of saints." Far more wise is this trust in God's righteousness than to repine against His laws as if He were severe.

We must *submit to the Divine retributions of wrong.* God punishes sin; shall we lament it? Surely He must not let "the wicked go unpunished." And when we see Him smite the guilty, we, instead of exclaiming against it, should bow in awe, and say, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it."

(*b.*) *Positive prohibition of all ambitious self-seeking* at such a crisis of the nation (ver. 5).

The "*whole land*" is under doom; no single individual should think to *escape his share of misfortune;* and certainly it is not seemly to be *intent upon earthly prosperity* amid prevailing calamities. At such a crisis, when even the elect can scarcely be saved (Matt. xxiv. 22), when the very flower and dignity of the nation's youth (Daniel, Ezekiel, &c.) will be carried into captivity, no man ought to foster plans of private promotion and prosperity.

It is *to cherishing ideas unduly lofty*

that men make reverses, when they come, the more painful for them to bear.

The world's frowns would not so much disquiet us if we did not so eagerly covet its smiles.

How unseemly for *God's servants to be building their hopes on mere earthly success*, when all is perishing and hastening to destruction!

IV. What word of consolation is conveyed to this affrighted and disconsolate soul?

(*a.*) *Exemption from the slaughtering sword* is guaranteed him. With death and destruction imminent, with evil coming "upon all flesh," his "life" should be secured to him. "Life" is the utmost which the most fortunate and favoured can hope to have preserved to him amid the general conflagration and ruin.

(*b.*) *Yet this shall only be secured by special clemency;* as "a *prey*," a thing snatched from danger, saved by prompt energy; as "a brand plucked from the burning."

Is it not *a great distinction* in a world where "*death hath passed upon all men*, for that all have sinned," to be *assured of salvation!* Even though "saved with fear, pulling them out of the fire." For this exemption from the common doom is ours whom God loves; "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

How *supremely satisfied and grateful* should we be if, though all earthly hopes and honours perish, we are guaranteed *safety of soul!* "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that *He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him* against that day."

Comments.—"There is not a word here of praise for his steady attachment to his master. However great might be his personal services, God's prophet had no honeyed words of flattery for his faithful minister, but only the bare and unseductive message of truth. It tells Baruch to give up his ambitious hopes, and be content with escaping with his life only."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"Baruch did not act as secretary for hire but for love. He esteemed it an honour and a happiness that by his skill he could serve the Lord, to whom he owed it. Therefore a glorious reward is imparted to him unsought, so that his name and remembrance are immortalised in the sacred record by an oracle addressed specially to him. This honour is to be esteemed still higher than the assurance, that this wretched mortal life should not be taken by violence before its time."—*Naegelsbach.*

Ver. 3. *Theme:* WORLDLY PROSPECTS SACRIFICED IN GOD'S SERVICE.

I. *Born to high social status*, he shrank from the disfavour which identification with God's prophet brought upon him. This association with Jeremiah incurred the wrath of the king, the princes, and the priests of Jerusalem; and thus he was shut out from all court favours and honours.

II. *An unpopular career*, of fidelity to God and His prophet, was certain to entail great worldly losses. All the avenues to the promotion and preferment of which he had a reasonable expectation, and to which he aspired, he saw closed by his call to the service of God.

III. *His faithful service of God* placed his life in jeopardy, and entailed obloquy and persecution (chap. xxxvi. 26). Here was a severe trial of faith, courage, and self-devotion to God.

IV. *His clinging to mere worldly honour was, however, a mistake, for God's purpose was* to destroy all national dignity (ver. 4). What would it then have advantaged him to have kept a secular goal in sight? And "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "He that will save his life shall lose it; but he that will lose his life for My sake shall keep it to life eternal."

Note.—i. It requires both courage and self-devotion to witness for truth in evil days.

ii. Love of the world is inconsonant with a fearless and faithful service of God.

iii. Earthly hopes must be surrendered by those who join the open witnesses for Christ.

iv. Every true follower of Jesus must

"take up his cross," and accept suffering and sacrifice as the earthly price of the eternal gain.

Vers. 3, 4. *Theme:* MAN'S VOICE MET BY GOD'S VOICE. "Thou didst say;" "The Lord saith thus."

Here we have two persons, Baruch and God, presented in a manner highly characteristic of each—Baruch absorbed only about himself; God terrible and tender.

The chapter shows that *the affairs of individual children of God* are of consequence in His eyes; deems them worthy of a revelation, of a personal contact with the afflicted spirit, and of special provision for it.

I. As to *Baruch:* God would show him the evil in himself, before He showed him the goodness there was in God. "*Thou* didst say." It is God's voice to man saying, "I know what is in thee, as well as what is in Myself." God had "heard" what Baruch had been saying, as He "heard" the groanings of the Israelites, the affliction of Hagar, &c. (Ps. cvi. 44).

1. God's hearing *a reason for our humility.*

2. There are *heart-voices* as well as lip-voices. As in Deut. vii. 17; viii. 17. God's ear is listening.

3. The *murmuring and selfishness* of heart-talk (ver. 3). All comes out when a heart fearlessly talks itself into words. And God often hears such talk from us — murmuring and impatient words.

4. The *prominence given to "self" in this talk.* Not a word about the woes coming on his country, or concerning God's honour; "I" is omnivorous. Self-love will always discolour and distort our views of God and everything.

5. The *discontented thoughts of self-love.* They make us think we have not been dealt with as liberally as we ought to have been; have been disciplined too much. We think only of the afflictions God has "added," not of His sustaining and beneficial care, and of God's purpose and aim.

II. As to *God:* His heart does not contract because He hears our hearts repining. He is listening; lets us talk on; not check us at once.

1. God *taking notice of a sorrowful heart.*

2. His manifestation of *the one-sidedness of our thoughts.*

3. God addressing man *in his personality.*

4. The *decisiveness* of God's correcting word.

5. Let us expect the *actings of sovereignty in mercy.* We must listen for His "thus;" all must be *His* way as regards the boon He confers.

6. His way may be *strange,* but will *surely be the right way.*

7. He will save us, but not by a weak change in His determination. He will do as He says; perhaps exercising us by vicissitudes, but watching over us with personal care, that we may come forth from our troubles taught of God, taught about ourselves; what there is *in ourselves:* "Thou didst say;" and what there is *in God:* "THE LORD SAITH THUS."—*Arranged and condensed from "Breviates," by Rev. P. B. Power, M.A.*

Ver. 5. *Theme:* WORLDLY ASPIRATIONS: "SEEKING GREAT THINGS."

I. Great things have been secured without seeking. And that indicates—

1. That *God can confer great things on whom He will.* "It is *in Thy hand* to make great" (1 Chron. xxix. 12). Comp. *David's* confession (2 Sam. xxii. 36).

2. That *the pathway to greatness is through lowliness to honour.* Observe Scripture instances: Moses *left the palace,* yet became leader of Israel! Solomon craved *wisdom* only, yet became rich and exalted! David *kept his father's sheep* while his brothers hung about Saul, yet was called up to be Israel's poet and king! Mary crept behind Christ and *anointed His feet,* yet her name and deed are published "throughout the whole world." Martyrs, who became "*the offscouring of the world,*" have become the glory of the Church! Christians, despised by the mighty, are to be sharers of Christ's throne!

Hence, *when we, for Christ's sake, surrender* the "great things" which

others seek, we are in the way of gaining *"greater things than these."* "Before honour is humility."

II. "Great things" may be sought worthily and even nobly. For it is to be remembered—

1. That Scripture *encourages a spirit of aspiration.* "Not slothful in business." "Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings." To aspire is not a proof of impiety, nor of worldly-mindedness.

2. *God bestows great worldly power and prosperity upon godly men.* For "all things are yours, *whether the world,*" &c. The high places of life are to be coveted for the sway and power for good they procure.

3. It is only when they are *sought for "self" and self-aggrandisement that they are prohibited.* For then they *ensnare* and *surfeit* and *debase* the soul.

III. "Great things," though they allure, do not enrich, the soul.

1. They are *not happiest* who are *highest.* "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." King compared with boy swinging on a gate—"Happier than a king!"

2. Great things are *not essential to happiness.*

3. They are always *associated with subtle and ceaseless temptations.*

4. Often *close the heart to higher influences and purer attractions.*

5. Always *prove transient and unsatisfactory.* "The fashion of this world passeth away." The heart is not rested, comforted, satisfied by them while they are possessed; and when they "take wings and fly away," they leave "vexation of spirit."

IV. Greatest things are assured to Christ's servants.

1. *Greater honours;* higher and more lasting titles than earth can yield. "Heir of God," &c.; "Kings and priests to God."

2. *Greater treasures;* more satisfying and elevating.

3. *Greater privileges and blessings.*

4. *Greatest glory* in the life to come. "Sit with Me on My throne."

Yet the Divine principle is this; *Through shame to glory.* As *Jesus,* through the Cross to the Throne: "Ought not Christ to have suffered and entered His glory?" As *His followers:* "If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together." Hence, seek *right things* for ourselves. God shall give the "*great things*" to us!

See Addenda to chap. xli.: AMBITION.

Theme: WHY GREAT THINGS SHOULD NOT BE SOUGHT FOR SELF.

i. Because *self ought never to be our ultimate object.*

ii. Because great things thereby *become objects of idolatrous worship.*

iii. Because to do so is to *subordinate the discharge of duty* to their acquisition and enjoyment.

iv. Because in doing so you will *involve yourselves and others in much positive suffering.*—*Rev. James Stewart.*

CHAPTER XLVI.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter.—*First Part:* Vers. 1–12, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; written *at Jerusalem,* immediately before the battle of Charchemish. This section forms a natural addendum to chap. xxv. *Vide* notes there on *Chronology, National Affairs,* and *Contemporaneous History;* also on chaps. vii. and x. *Second Part:* Vers. 18–28, is a prophecy *uttered in Egypt* after the migration of the remnant thither, carrying Jeremiah with them, and should be connected with chap. xliii. 8–13. It must have preceded chap. xliv., which *is the final message of abandonment;* for here in vers. 27, 28, a message of comfort is sent, in which the old (and as yet disannulled) covenant-relationship is still recognised and asserted. *Vide* notes on chaps. xliii. and xliv. See *Historic Facts* below.

2. Geographical References.—Ver. 2. "*By the river Euphrates in Charchemish.*" "Charchemish" is usually identified with *Circusium,* at the juncture of the Chebar with the Euphrates; but Professor Rawlinson disputes this localisation, and would place it considerably higher up the river.

Ver. 8. "*As a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers.*" *Yeor,* "flood," is the *Nile;* and "his waters" are the branches of the Nile in Lower Egypt.

Ver. 9. "*Ethiopians, Libyans*, and *Lydians*: Heb. *Cush, Phut*, and *Ludim*. "Cush," the *Nubian* negro; "Phut," the Libyans of Mauritania; and "Ludim," the Hamite Lydians of North Africa.

Ver. 14. "*Migdol, Noph, Tahpanhes*." *Vide* notes on chaps. ii. 14–16, and xliv. 1.

Ver 18. "*Tabor*" lifts itself from the plain of Esdraelon 1350 feet; its height above the sea-level being 1805 feet. "*Carmel*" forms a bold promontory jutting out into the Mediterranean.

Ver. 25. "*Multitude of No*;" rather *Amon of No*; called in Nahum iii. 8 (*margin*) No-Amon. The sacred city of Thebes, capital of Upper Egypt. Comp. Ezek. xxx. 14–16. Jupiter-Ammon had his famous temple there. Ammon was the supreme deity of the triad of Thebes.

3. Personal Allusion.—Ver. 2. "*Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt*," son and successor of Psammeticus, and the sixth king of the twenty-sixth dynasty. It was he who, when going against Charchemish, four years earlier, encountered king Josiah at Megiddo, and slew him, but whose defeat by Nebuchadnezzar is here pronounced. In this battle he lost all the territory which had been subject to the Pharaohs west of the Euphrates, and between it and the Nile. He is famed as having equipped a fleet of discovery from the Red Sea along the coast of Africa, which doubled the Cape of Good Hope and returned to Egypt by the Mediterranean.

4. Natural History.—Ver. 8. "*Riseth like a flood.*" The Nile's annual overflow at the approach of the summer solstice.

Ver. 11. "*Gilead, and take balm.*" *Vide* chap. viii. 22.

Ver. 20. "*A very fair heifer.*" Her god was the bull Apis, and she is here called, as his spouse, the fair heifer.

Ver. 22. "*Voice shall go like a serpent*," hissing as a snake disturbed in its haunts by the woodcutter.

Ver. 23. "*Grasshoppers.*" Rendered "locust" (Exod. x. 4, 15; Judges i. 5). The *gryllus gregarius*.

5. Manners and Customs.—Ver. 3. "*Order the buckler and shield.*" "*Buckler*," a small round target carried on the left arm by the light infantry; "*shield*," carried by the heavy-armed troops and covering the whole body.

Ver. 4. "*Harness the horses*," the cavalry and charioteers. "*Brigandines*," cuirasses or coats of mail.

6. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 5. "*Fear was round about.*" The prophet's old cry, *Magor-Missabib* (see on chap. vi. 25).

Ver. 9. "*Come up, ye horses;*" or, "*Mount ye the horses.*"

Ver. 11. "*Many medicines*," &c. Comp. chap. xxx. 13, "*Healing-plaster hast thou none.*"

Ver. 15. "*Why are thy valiant men swept away?*" Lit. "why *is* (singular) thy *valiants.*" Evidently a corruption of the text. The LXX. read διατί ἔφυγεν ἀπό σου ὁ Ἄπις; ὁ μοσχος ὁ ἐκλεκτος σου οὐκ ἐμεινεν: thus recognising in "the valiant," or strong, *Apis the bull*. It is a Scripture figure, "strong bulls" (Ps. xxii. 12); and this Apis, the bull-shaped Egyptian idol, to whom *might* was attributed by its worshippers, would be unable to *stand* before Jehovah. This original reference to Apis as the strong one became corrupted by transcribers (who did not understand its reference) into a plural noun, as if alluding to *horses* or *heroes*. *Cambyses*, in his invasion of Egypt, destroyed the sacred bull.

Ver. 17. "*They did cry there. Pharaoh king of Egypt* is but *a noise.*" The LXX. translate, "*Call ye the name of Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt, Sam Esbir.*" The *Syriac* renders the words, "*Disturber and passer of times;*" and the *Vulgate*, "*Time hath brought tumult.*" All three regard the last two words as *a prophetic name* for Necho. But שָׁאוֹן is in the abstract *destruction*; but in chap. xxv. 31, it is rendered "*a noise;*" *tumult*, therefore, *confusion*, as associated with destruction. So Pharaoh is to be surnamed "a noise" or tumult.

HISTORIC FACTS REFERRED TO IN CHAPTER XLVI.

I. The Egyptian power broken by Nebuchadnezzar (vers. 1–12).

1. *Preliminary incidents.* About four years before this decisive campaign, Pharaoh-*Necho* had marched towards Charchemish. Josiah, king of Judah, has hastened to Megiddo to intercept Pharaoh, and was there slain in battle. Necho thereupon made Judea tributary, carried away to Egypt Josiah's son Jehoahas (*Shallum*), and set up his brother Jehoiakim. This defeat of Judah laid Phœnicia and Syria easily open to subjugation by Necho, who soon "established his own dominion over the whole country between Egypt and the Euphrates" (Rawlinson). *Meanwhile*, two years after Josiah's fall (see note, *Contemporaneous History*, to chap. vii.), and two years before this campaign at Charchemish, the Assyrian power at *Nineveh* had been defeated by the Babylonians and Medes. Nebuchadnezzar thereupon became the leader of this new Babylonian power, and came at length to confront the proud Egyptian forces at Charchemish.

2. *The decisive battle.* Taking this prophetic poem literally, we have here

described the struggle at Charchemish. First, the flower of Egypt's army advances (ver. 3), magnificently equipped (vers. 3, 4). They are repulsed by Nebuchadnezzar's forces (ver. 5); and with graphic and stirring language Jeremiah depicts the sudden terror and amazement of the Egyptian hosts, long used to victory, at finding the battle turning against them; then falling back and betaking themselves to hasty flight (vers. 5, 6). But from this first repulse they rally; and the whole land of Egypt (ver. 8), together with its dependent nations and allies (ver. 9), seems to rise up like a flood and rolls into the furious conflict. They march forth now in assurance and pride; but this day of their fury and pomp is the appointed day of Jehovah's vengeance (ver. 10). Egypt is smitten with an incurable wound (ver. 11), and the cry of the smitten armies resounds through the lands (ver. 11).

II. Egypt invaded and vanquished by Babylon (vers. 13–26).

1. *Intervening events.* The new Babylonish empire (Chaldea) was now supreme. Judah's tributary dependence was now transferred to Nebuchadnezzar (see note, *Contemporaneous History*, to chap. i.); this was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (see note, *National Affairs*, to chap. xxv.) Until the eleventh year of Zedekiah this vassalage continued (chap. xxix. 2), when, in consequence of Zedekiah's falsity and the nation's treachery, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, carrying the people captive to Babylon. The remnant of the poor who were left on the land afterwards migrated into Egypt (chap. xliii.), where they lapsed into grossest idolatry (chap. xliv.) In vain had the prophet Jeremiah there pleaded with his apostate people; therefore Jehovah withdrew His name from them (chap. xliv. 26), and threatened their extermination when Egypt should be overthrown (chap. xliii. 9–13), of which the death of Pharaoh-*Hophra* should be the ominous sign (chap. xliv. 29, 30).

2. *The fatal invasion of Egypt.* Nebuchadnezzar had been held back by his siege of Tyre, which, though all the nations had been forced into subjection by his irresistible armies, long withstood his attack. At length (585 B.C.), after thirteen years' siege, Tyre fell; Nebuchadnezzar marched his army against Egypt. The Egyptian power was now in its boastful zenith; its cities were like a "*forest*" (ver. 23), numbering a thousand and twenty. Yet the Egyptian army was devoid of patriotism, for they were subjected races (see ver. 9) and mercenaries, thirty thousand of whom Hophra hired from Asia Minor—Carians and Ionians (see Herodotus). In this crisis these hirelings, instead of defending the country, resolve to desert the Egyptian cause and return each to his native land (ver. 16). Egypt thus sinks into impotent rage, like a serpent hissing in a thicket (vers. 19–23); terrified by the force of the Babylonish assault into abject submission (vers. 24–26). For forty years Egypt bore the yoke of Babylon, when, in the time of Cyrus, she recovered her freedom, but not her glory; for she has been in servile subjection to foreign powers until this day (see Ezek. xxix. 11–15).

III. Egypt preserved from total extinction by the Chaldeans (ver. 26). Forty years after the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, in which she was despoiled of all her glory and treasures (Ezek. xxix. 19), Cyrus won for Egypt her emancipation. And through these long centuries, *though Babylon has ceased to exist*, though mighty dynasties have become extinct, Egypt has *continued as a monument* of God's faithful word. Instead, however, of regaining her old force for aggression and aggrandisement, her power is permanently broken (Ezek. xxix. 11–15). But from that time she has been "inhabited;" and to this day, in her humiliation, she testifies to the *might and justice of God*—a *warning* to those who harm His people, and an *encouragement* to those He promises to befriend.

HOMILIES AND OUTLINES ON CHAPTER XLVI.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* GOD'S JUDGMENTS UPON THE NATIONS.

I. Jehovah's sway is wide as the universe. Not limited to Israel and Judah. His omniscience *surveys* the nations. His omnipotence *sways* the nations. He marks their *history;* He works their *destinies.*

II. Jehovah's wrath is against all ungodliness. Angry with His own apostate people. Equally angry against iniquitous Egypt. The fate of Josiah shall be avenged (see above, *Historic Facts*). All nations who defy God's rule shall feel His rod. If He *smite His own people*, let not *His foes think to escape!*

III. Jehovah's justice pursues into all lands. Let not Israel *impiously* think to defy God by fleeing into Egypt; nor to secure immunity by alliance with the mighty.

Let not Israel *despondently* imagine that the wicked will retain their proud ascendancy over God's people whom they have subdued.

"AGAINST THE GENTILES." See Homilies on chap. XXV., "*The Manifold Judgments of God*" (p. 469); "*The Wine-cup of Wrath*" (p. 474).

Vers. 3, 4. *Theme:* BRILLIANT HOPES BAFFLED. "Order ye the buckler and shield," &c.

The satire of prophecy is very severe. Thus the prophet summons the proud Egyptians to the war against Nebuchadnezzar's hosts. This rallying call is full of bitter irony. *Grand preparations* only to issue in *ignominious defeat.*

I. A mighty army well equipped for war. It would almost seem that victory was theirs before they engaged in war.

1. *Absorbing attention to our own resources of strength* shuts out all heed of God and His designs. We trust in armaments and forces, rest in outward defences; and thus *ignore God*, and *alienate* Him.

2. All our resources of strength are but a *deception and a snare* when God is against us. They *delude* us; and *allure* on boastfully in the course of defeat and destruction.

3. *External splendour*, being greatly impressive and imposing, is often *imagined to ensure prosperity.* Men believe in display; and

4. Grow confident in the parade of power and skill. But Goliath may fall before a stone and sling. The loftiness of men may be brought low.

II. A baffled army utterly vanquished in war. It was a sight for *wonder.* "*Wherefore* have I seen," &c. (ver. 5). "Wherefore" is a particle expressive of surprise: "*How!*" "*Why!*"

1. *Wondrous surprises do occur* in human experience, which reverse all our boastings. Often in *secular courses* men find events occur which shake them from their confidences. *Death-scenes* have shown the "*boastful lips put to silence,*" &c.

2. *Proud and resplendent forces are startlingly overthrown;* vanquished contrary to all reckonings; as if a *superhuman* Hand had to do with the issues of our struggles and efforts. God *reverses the plans of the proud*, and *defeats the hopes of the vainglorious.*

3. *Strongest forces will find themselves "beaten down"* when they oppose the will of Omnipotence. The Divine power strikes down the mighty, and thereby—

(*a.*) *Human arrogance is chastised.*

(*b.*) *Divine righteousness is satisfied* (ver. 10).

Ver. 5. *Theme:* THE DISMAY OF DEFEAT.

I. Solid guarantees of success. "*Mighty*" (ver. 5); "*Swift*" (ver. 6).

1. Hopes are built on *seeming securities.*

2. *With boastful confidence* men attempt their aims.

3. None, however opposed to God's purposes, *allows himself to expect defeat;* but *makes his endeavours amid promises of success.*

II. Guarantees of success overthrown.

1. Forces, whose resistance are unreckoned, *may thwart our hopes.*

2. Human resources of strength *are impotent when God is opposed to our success.*

3. *Pride and prowess will fall* in the day of God's resistance.

4. Souls, deluded by vain boasting, will *meet an appalling defeat.*

III. Success overthrown followed by dismay.

1. *What amazement will overwhelm the wicked* in their doom!

2. *How helpless will the sinner be in the moment of his overthrow.*

3. How certain is the *failure of all earthly schemes*, and especially of all *plans of salvation*, which God disapproves.

4. *Oh, the terror of an eternal defeat!*

Ver. 11. *Theme:* HEALING FOR STRICKEN ONES. For *Egypt?* Yes; equally as for *Israel* (chap. viii. 22).

It is always right to recognise amongst you, as a congregation, *the suffering.* Not in physical affliction merely, but *spiritual sufferers:* sinners, backsliders, Christians who have lost health.

The need of Christ's ministry of healing, and of the Christian ministry of consolation, is still evident; and can never cease while men suffer from the wounds of sin.

I. **Healing urgently needed.** What has *wounded Egypt?* Sin and strife. What has *wounded souls?* The same.

1. *Persevering search for remedies.* "Use *many* medicines."

2. *Fruitless application of remedies.* "*In vain use many,*" &c. The world offers "many medicines." If *conscience* is distressed, try pleasure, business, ceremonialism. If the *heart* is wounded, try exciting literature, diverting travels, cheerful society, &c.

But like the sufferer (Mark v. 26) who spent her money on many physicians, yet could be healed of none.

II. **Healing offered the stricken.**

1. Seek the healing *at the right place.* "Go up to Gilead." Sinners, go to Calvary.

2. Secure *the right remedy.* "Take balm." The *blood* of Christ for cleansing the conscience; the *love* of Christ for calming the heart; the *grace* of Christ for clothing the soul.

See homilies on chap. XXX. 12–15: "*Faithless Healers and Vain Remedies;*" and "*Healing Medicines.*"

Ver. 15. *Theme:* VALOUR DEFEATED. "*Why are thy valiant men swept away? They stood not, because the Lord did drive them.*"

(i.) There is AN UNSEEN POWER GREATER than that visible.

(ii.) When the unseen Power *is against* "*the valiants,*" VALOUR IS OF NO AVAIL.

(iii.) It is GOD WHO DECIDES VICTORIES, and *weakest armies* may, therefore, *take the field against the strong.*

I. Since "*power belongeth unto God,*" we should attempt no conflict without **first gaining Omnipotence on our side.** Enter, therefore, upon no enterprise without God.

II. **Valour is noble, and merits a** *better issue than to be defeated.*

They who are "valiant for the truth," for rights civil and religious, &c., *deserve success.*

With "God for them" they shall *go on* "*conquering* and to conquer."

Yet *reliance on our valour* will repel God from our side, and insure that the "valiant men are swept away."

III. The *overthrow of the valiant* carries its own **admonition against Godless confidence.**

Mighty *armies* have fallen, because they trusted in their equipments and strategies. Mighty *men* have fallen before weaker forces—Samson, Goliath, &c.

God is jealous, and will *allow no arrogance and boasting.* He has *threatened the proud and wicked with overthrow.* "Pride goeth before destruction," &c. *Victory will therefore be denied to the valiant who ignore God,* trusting in their own courage and strength.

IV. **Humility blended with valour** wins God's mighty help.

1. Humility is *better even than* valour, for it secures that which is infinitely more important—"God giveth grace to the humble."

2. Valour *blended with* humility has wrought marvels, making men "mighty through God," so that "one may chase a thousand, and two may put ten thousand to flight."

3. *Valour is commanded* in those who stand up for Christ and His cause—"Quit ye like men, be strong;" but the *uniform to be worn* by every soldier of the Cross is this: "Be clothed with humility."

Ver. 19. *Theme:* EXULTING OVER THE

RUIN OF ENEMIES. Jeremiah had reason to loathe Egypt, and it had been well had his people hated the land and its inhabitants. "Come out from the midst of her, My people, and be not partakers of her plagues."

I. *The overthrow of sinners* contemplated with a natural satisfaction.

1. The Egyptians typify the foes of God's Church.

2. *All the miseries and humiliations of life* are associated with these spiritual enemies: like "the hard bondage" of Egypt before God redeemed His people.

3. *Molestations and oppression* had been experienced by Israel at the hands of these enemies.

4. The righteous see with satisfaction that the wrongs they have suffered will be requited.

5. It is with equanimity and a sense of right that the overthrow of our oppressors is contemplated.

II. *The overthrow of sinners* rejoiced in with righteous gladness.

1. The law of recompense is a gracious law; it *vindicates* God's justice and power, and assures the righteous who suffer wrongfully that God will in due season *reverse the tyranny of evil-doers.*

2. *The honour of God,* as much as the peace of the righteous, *necessitates the ultimate overthrow* of the enemies of God and His kingdom.

3. A godly soul therefore *exults in the merited defeat of evil;* for—

(*a.*) It insures the *peace of the godly.*

(*b.*) It vindicates the *faithfulness of God.*

(*c.*) It frustrates the *purposes of evil.*

(*d.*) It demonstrates the *certainty of justice—against* the guilty, and *to* the godly.

Vers. 27, 28. *Theme:* ISRAEL'S RESTORATION. (See notes and homilies on chap. xxx. 10, 11: "*Recovery of Lost Israel,*" and "*Nations Obliterated; Israel Preserved.*") "Egypt's fall and restoration have been foretold; but the prophet closes with a word of exhortation to the *many erring Jews who dwelt there.* With loving earnestness he—

I. Reminds them of Israel's hope, and of the promise of *salvation to mankind* bound up with their national existence. Further, he *calls back to their remembrance the prediction* from which these two verses are taken (chap. xxx.), and thereby

II. Assures them of Israel's return from exile, and of the certain accomplishment, by their means, of *God's purposes of mercy* to the whole human race. Why, then, should they flee from their country and trust in a heathen power, instead of endeavouring to *live in a manner worthy* of

III. The noble destiny which was their *true glory and ground of confidence!*"—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

Note.—"When God turns things upside down, and takes care that neither root nor branch remains, *His little flock must be preserved.* The punishments which redound to the *destruction of the ungodly* redound to the *amelioration of the godly.* For from these He takes the *eternal* punishment, and turns even the *temporal* punishment to their advantage; but the ungodly drink it to the dregs."—*Cramer.*

CHAPTER XLVII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. Chronology of the Chapter.—"Before that Pharaoh smote Gaza" (ver. 1); but *which* Pharaoh? Pharaoh-*Necho,* on his return from defeating Josiah at Megiddo (2 Chron. xxxv. 20), or Pharaoh-*Hophra,* on his return from the fruitless effort to save Jerusalem from the Chaldeans (chap. xxxvii. 5, 7); or this same Pharaoh-Hophra after his defeat at Carchemish (*vide* previous chapter, notes)? The probabilities favour *Pharaoh-Necho,* and date the prophecy before the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Note, that just as an enemy *from the south* (Egypt) is about to assail Philistia, the prophet predicts the seemingly unlikely and remote fact that an enemy *from the north* (the Babylonians) should invade and spoil them! Note further, that the country of the Philistines was overrun by the army of Nebuchadnezzar during, or immediately after, the siege of Tyre, while prosecuting his march towards Egypt.

2. Geographical References (ver. 1). "*Philistines . . . Gaza.*" Philistia bordered upon Egypt, and Pharaoh-Necho seized this on his retreat (defeated by the Chaldeans) from Carchemish; for Gaza was "the key to Egypt," and his holding this would check the now victorious Chaldeans from invading Egypt itself.

Ver. 4. "*Tyrus and Zidon.*" Neighbours to Philistia, so that the Phœnicians of Tyre and Sidon would naturally become "*helpers*" to the Philistines, making common cause against the invader, for the overthrow of Philistia carried, as a consequence, the overthrow of Tyre and Sidon also. "*The country of Caphtor:*" perhaps *Crete* (so Gesenius), or *Cyprus* (so Kitto). Others suggest *Cappadocia*; and the city *Caparorsa*, situate between Palestine and Idumæa, is pointed out as probable on account of being adjacent.

Ver. 5. "*Ashkelon . . . their valley.*" The "valley" is the inland valley of Philistia as distinguished from her maritime fortresses, *Gaza* and *Askelon*.

The Sword of the Lord upon Philistia.

For ages long had the Philistines embittered the lot of Israel. From the times of Shamgar (Judges iii. 31), down to those of Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 8), they were both hostile and dangerous neighbours. Now the day of retribution had arrived, when Philistia's hostility should be punished. For "God is *not slack* concerning His promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering," &c.

I. The avenging sword—

1. *Falls at length, though long sheathed* (ver. 4). Compare Ps. xxxvii. 12, 13.

2. *Is wielded by other hands than we surmise* (ver. 2). "The *north*" (see note above to *Chronology*). God selects His own agencies for punishing men.

II. The smitten sufferers—

1. *Paralysed with terror* (ver. 3). Solicitous for themselves to the forgetting of all natural affection.

2. *Destitute of helpers* (ver. 4). For when God's sword smites, no confederacy of defence can protect or shield.

3. *Abject in grief and dismay* (ver. 5). "*Baldness*" a sign of anguish; "*cut thyself*" the conduct of terrified despair. When God smites, we *feel His strokes*.

III. The appeal for mercy (ver. 6).

1. *Though smitten for their sin*, men cry out against its punishment.

2. *Though prayerless while sinning*, men appeal for pity when its chastisements are upon them.

3. *Though stubborn against God's word*, sinners cannot hold out long under His "sword."

IV. The full measure of doom (ver. 7).

1. *Appointed judgments* will be effectually carried out.

2. *No pleadings for mercy will stay those judgments* when they at last come on the guilty.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Critical and Exegetical Notes.—1. **Chronology of the Chapter.**—Naegelsbach suggests, with ample justification, that "this prophecy certainly belongs to the time of Jehoiakim, and *before the fourth year*, the Chaldeans and Nebuchadnezzar not being mentioned;" and adds: "The form of the superscription favours its contemporaneousness with the first prophecy against Egypt (xlvi. 1, 2)." *Cf.* notes on chap. xxv.

2. **Contemporary Scriptures.**—*Cf.* on chap. xxv. Here it is appropriate to point out that this chapter is, to a remarkable degree, a *compilation of extracts from other prophets*, mainly from Isaiah. Gesenius "depreciates this prophecy as a tasteless piece of patchwork" [Dr. Payne Smith] from Isaiah; and adverse critics have challenged the wisdom and good taste of Jeremiah's work in thus putting together such a fragmentary collection of older inspired utterances "against Moab." But Naegelsbach well states the case: "Jeremiah's object in this prophecy was evidently to reanimate, as it were, the former declarations of similar purport, and comprise them together for the sake of a powerful total effect. From ver. 29 onwards there is a constant, more or less free, use of older utterances." Quotations taken from Isaiah xv. and xvi. are numerous. Thus comp. Isaiah xv. 2–7 with vers. 37, 38, 34, 5, 36; Isa. xvi. 6–12, with vers. 29–33, 36, 35; and Isa. xxiv. with vers. 43, 44. So, also, words and phrases, in vers. 45, 24, and 41, seem to be appropriated from Amos ii. 2; and in vers. 26 and 42 from Zephaniah ii. 8–10; and vers. 15, 46 from Numbers xxi. 28, 29, xxiv. 17. It should be noted that Isaiah prophesies the devastation of Moab by the *Assyrian* king, *Shalmaneser*; Jeremiah refers to its overthrow by the *Chaldean* king, *Nebuchadnezzar*.

3. **National Affairs.**—The historic record of 2 Kings xxiv. 2, shows that Moab had at that time joined the Chaldeans in hostility to Judah.

4. **Contemporaneous History.**—*Moab's overthrow* was effected by Nebuchadnezzar five years after his destruction of Jerusalem, at the time when he also attacked Egypt (*cf.* notes on chap. xliii., specially vers. 8–13) and Ammon (*cf.* chap. xlix. 1–6). In Josephus, *Antiq.*, x. 9, § 7, we have the record.

5. **Geographical References.**—Ver. 1. "*Nebo,*" a mountain and town of Moab. "*Kiriathaim,*" a place of great antiquity, originally possessed by the Enim (Gen. xiv. 5), and afterwards by the Moabites; placed by Eusebius ten miles west of Medeba. "*Misgab,*" i.e. *citadel*, not a proper name at all.

Ver. 2. "*Heshbon,*" the chief city of Moab, situate midway between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok; it was an ancient and royal city. "*Madmen,*" a town of which no information exists.

Ver. 3. "*Horonaim:*" the same as the city *Avara* mentioned by Ptolemy. See Nehem. ii. 10; Isa. xv. 5. It lay in a plain.

Ver. 5. "*Luhith*" lay on a height; locality unknown.

Ver. 18. "*Dibon,*" situate on the south bank of the Arnon. The remains of the fortifications of Dibon are still visible (Burckhardt's *Travels*).

Ver. 19. "*Aroer.*" On the north bank of the Arnon, a city of Ammon.

Ver. 20. "*Arnon.* This river was the north boundary between Moab and Ammon. See Numb. xxi. 13.

Ver. 21. "*Holon.*" *Cf.* Josh. xv. 51. "*Jahazah.*" *Cf.* Numb. xxi. 23. "*Mephaath.*" *Cf.* Josh. xiii. 18; xxi. 37. Of these and following cities enumerated little or nothing is known.

Ver. 32. "*Sea of Jazar.*" Jazar lies in an upland valley, about fifteen miles north of Heshbon. "Sea" is very doubtful here; probably a transcriber's error.

6. **Personal Allusion.**—Ver. 7. "*Chemosh,*" the national god of Moab (Numb. xxi. 29). *His* being led into captivity represents the total ruin of the nation he protected. The literal name here is "*Chemish,*" and this is doubtless correct, as in the word "Carchemish," *i.e.* the fortress of Chemish.

7. **Natural History.**—Ver. 28. "*The dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth;*" lit. "that resteth in the passages of the sides of the abyss." Tristram says, "The wild pigeon invariably selects . . . deep ravines for its nesting and roosting places." *Henderson* quotes the following classics:—

Φύγεν ὅστε πέλεια
Ἡ ῥά θ' ὑπ' ἴρηκος κοίλην εἰσέπτατο πέτρην.—*Iliad*, xxi. 493.

"Qualis spelunca subito commota columba
Cui domus, et dulces latebroso in pumice nidi."—*Æneid*, v. 213.

8. **Literary Criticisms.**—Ver. 2. "*In Heshbon they have devised:*" a play upon words, חֶשְׁבּוֹן—תַּחְשֹׁבִנָּה, "Heshbon" means a place of *devising* or *counsel*. "*Thou shalt be cut down* (margin, brought to silence), *O Madmen:*" another play on words; "Madmen" means *silence*.

Ver. 7. "*Thy works,*" *i.e.* fortifications. Moab was renowned for them.

Ver. 45. "*Because of the force,*" rather *without* force. A better translation is: "The fugitives stand powerless under the shadow of Heshbon." "*The crown of the head of the tumultuous ones.*" "Crown of the head" is here poetical for the loftiest elevation of Moab; and the Moabites, in reference to the roar and fury with which they give battle, are called "sons of tumult."

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER XLVIII.

MOAB'S DOOM.

Ver. 1. *Theme:* SIN THE PRECURSOR OF DOOM. "Because the destruction of the Moabites is of no service to us except for penitence, we must note well what particular *sins are specified*, of which they were guilty, and for which such heavy punishments were heaped upon them, viz.:—

I. **Disdain**, in that they gave no one a good word, were unfriendly, and only blustered and boasted with every one (Ps. lii. 3).

II. **Confidence** in their fortifications, power, money, and riches (2 Chron. xxxii. 8; Isa. xl. 6).

III. **Security**, as if all were prosperous and peaceful, which was the sin of their sister Sodom (Ezek. xvi. 49; Zeph. ii. 9).

IV. **Talking great things**, and indulging self-praise. But although Goliath was so mighty a fellow, he had yet to bite the grass (1 Sam. xvii. 50).

V. **Pride and arrogance.** These never do well, but act with violence and injustice. By violence, injustice,

and avarice, however, a kingdom passes from one people to another."—*Cramer.*

Theme: SINNERS ALIKE IN ALL AGES. "How many are still like the Moabites; for how many are there who—

I. Depend on their power and violence, their fortified cities and buildings, their riches, money, and property, and set all their hope and confidence thereon! How many are there who, when they have been some time at peace,

II. Become secure, and anticipate no further evil, thinking there is no more trouble from the rising to the setting of the sun! How many are there who—

III. Rely on their own strength, and say, Let the enemy come, we are a match for him! How many there are who, when they surpass others in bodily strength, or in mental gifts, or in perishable goods,

IV. Become proud and abusive; ridicule, despise, and treat badly their inferiors, as if they had "found such among thieves," as God the Lord here says (ver 27)! And, although all good and perfect gifts come from the Father of lights, yet many will not acknowledge this, but

V. Ascribe their advantages to their own wisdom and skill, do not thank God for them, and thus make themselves the idol they serve."—*Bibl. Summarien*, Halle, 1848. From *Lange.*

Ver. 2. *Theme:* PRAISE TO MAN SILENCED. "There shall be *no more praise of Moab.*"

I. Human praise is of short duration. Be it offered to nations or men, it is like the trumpet strain, which swells in loudness and then dies into silence; like the fragrance of a flower, which, however sweet, soon passes away.

II. Praise to men can scarcely be given with justice. Why should praise be given to *a nation* for its greatness—of wealth, intelligence, territory—when that greatness is the result of the development of natural resources, or of administrative power, given to it of God? And why should praise be ascribed to a *man of genius or benevolence*, when his genius is a Divine endowment, and his benevolence a Divine implantation?

III. Praise is due only to God. Shall we praise the Alps that they reach unto the clouds, or the eagle that she bears her young upon her wings and covers them with her feathers? No! The mighty Alps are what they are by the creative power of God, and the noble eagle is what she is by the instinct God has given to her.

Mighty nations are but Alps of God's creation, and *great men* are but eagles of God's endowing; for "of Him and through Him are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever."

IV. Heaven-taught men never fail to trace the favours their fellow-men confer up to their Divine Source. Does Joseph obtain favour of Pharaoh? It is acknowledged that "the *Lord gave* him favour" (Gen. xxxix. 21; xli. 52). Is Daniel a favourite in the court of Babylon? "*God* had brought Daniel into favour and tender love," &c. (Dan. i. 9). Is the Church at Corinth earnestly cared for by Titus? Paul thanks *God* for putting that "care into the heart" of Titus.

Every river has its source, the Avon or Thames, the Niger or Nile, and so has every blessing; and that source is God!

V. Praise to man shall be silenced that God may receive His due. Often, instead of all blessings being traced to God, they are in part traced to men; and sometimes so largely to man as if he were the greater benefactor of the two.

But silence eventually shall come upon all human praise.

VI. God's praise is the Christian's sweetest employ, and it shall be an endless employ. "There shall be no more praise of Moab;" but neither in time or eternity will God's praise cease.

> "Praise shall employ my noblest powers
> While immortality endures!
> Thy days of praise shall ne'er be past
> While life or breath or being last."

Death may silence the tongue, but it

cannot the soul; and in heaven it will perpetuate God's praises.

"When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save."

As He loved us *from* everlasting, so shall our praise be *to* everlasting. His everlasting love will call forth our everlasting song.—*Arranged from Pledge's "Walks with Jeremiah."*

Ver. 4. *Theme:* A CRY FROM LITTLE ONES. "Moab is destroyed; *her little ones have caused a cry to be heard.*" Calamity comes upon all, young and old. However *innocent*, however "*little*," none escape.

I. Children suffer. "Cry," as if *in distress!* Yes, even "little ones" share in pain, grief, and calamity. (1.) Sad to think of *suffering children;* in hospitals, at home. (2.) Sad, also, to think of *sorrowing children:* little hearts broken with grief; orphans, ill-used children, hungry children. (3.) Most sad to think of *sinning children. They* suffer most,—in their consciences now; and, if they die in their sins, they suffer in doom! For—

II. Children perish. "Cry" as they fall under the *destroyer's* hands. For "*Moab is destroyed,*" and in the destruction the children are included.

1. *Cruel people will even injure and destroy "little ones."* Think of Herod's soldiers slaying the infants of Bethlehem. There are evil men and women who would destroy the innocence, the purity, the affection, the truthfulness, the happiness of children. They do it with *bad books*, by teaching them to *lie and deceive*, by tempting them to *break God's day and His laws.* And children are perishing around us! (See Matt. xviii. 6.)

2. *Satan delights in destroying the "little ones."* A "roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."

III. Children pray. "Cry" as if in prayer. Doubtless these "little ones" in Moab would cry out to the destroyers, entreating them not to hurt or kill them.

1. Children *can* pray. "Cause a cry to be heard."

2. Children *may pray in a wrong direction:* to their cruel destroyers, instead of to God, their mighty Deliverer.

3. Children *should* pray; for peril is near, and Jesus waits to save those who seek Him. "Call upon *Me* in the day of trouble, and I will hear thee."

Ver. 9. *Theme:* HASTENING TO ESCAPE. "Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away."

I. Wherefore should a soul "make haste" in seeking salvation? Because—

1. The "spoiler" is alert (ver. 8).

2. None will be exempted (ver. 8).

3. No hiding-place will be secure (ver. 6).

4. Moments wasted give opportunity to the foe.

5. Lost opportunities never return.

II. From what should a soul so earnestly speed its flight?

1. From *delights and possessions which it had hitherto cherished:* "Thy works and thy treasures" (ver. 7). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

2. From *every object of trust.* "Thou hast *trusted* in," &c. (ver. 7). They are *insufficient;* and to cling to them will work *delusion* and destruction.

3. From *all false religious hopes.* "Chemosh and his priests" (ver. 7), all shall fail Moab; as all religious hopes, but Christ, shall fail the soul.

III. How can a soul hasten its escape from pursuing perils? "*Give wings* to Moab, that it may flee and get away." Comp. Ps. lv. 6.

1. *Its own unaided powers will not suffice* to save the soul.

2. *The "wings" a soul needs are prayer, purpose, faith.* For by these it speeds its way to Christ.

3. *Such supernatural endowments must be "given;"* the soul cannot assume them at will, nor create them for the emergency. God will give such "wings." He gives the *Holy Spirit;* and the Spirit stirs the soul to prayer, to purpose, and to faith.

Blessed is that soul who "*gets away*" from snares and pursuing foes, safely hid

in Christ! "*Flee*" to the *cross;* "flee" to the *throne of grace;* "flee" to your *Bibles;* "flee" to the *open heart of Jesus.*

Ver. 10. *Theme:* DOING GOD'S WORK REMISSLY. This utter devastation of Moab was "the work of the Lord;" and the instruments He would use must do it thoroughly. Comp. Saul's sin as to Amalek (1 Sam. xv. 3, 9), and Ahab's as to Syria (1 Kings xx. 42)

Notes.—"The prophet pronounces '*a curse*' upon ministers of the Divine justice if, being sent to destroy Moab, they are remiss in executing the sentence."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"The work of destroying Moab is here mainly meant. But the text taketh in *all lawful employments:* these are God's works, and must be done vigorously, with all our might, in obedience to God, and for His greatest glory. Not *soldiers* only, that have a good cause, and in a good calling must likewise take a good courage, and do execution lustily; but *magistrates* also, who are keepers of both tables of the law, must do right to all without partiality. *Ministers* must look to the ministry which they have received from the Lord that they fulfil it. Every man, in his particular place and station, must be '*not slothful in business*, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' In *God's immediate service* especially men must stir up themselves to take hold of Him, minding the work, and not doing it in a customary, formal way. A very heathen [Aristides] could say, '*Ignavia in rebus divinis est nefaris*'—Dulness in Divine things is abominable. And Numa, king of the Romans, made a law, that none should be careless or cursory in the service of God, and appointed an officer to cry oft to the people at such a time, '*Hoc agite*'—Mind what you do, and do it to your utmost. He that is ambitious of God's curse, let him do otherwise."—*Trapp.*

Theme: DECEITFULNESS IN GOD'S SERVICE. Jeremy Taylor suggests—

(i.) *He that serves God* with the body, *without the soul*, serves God deceitfully.

(ii.) He that serves God with the soul, *without the body*, when both can be conjoined, doth the work of God deceitfully.

(iii.) They are deceitful in the Lord's work that *reserve one faculty for sin*, or *one sin for themselves*, or one action to please their appetite and many for religion.

(iv.) And they who *think God sufficiently served with abstaining from evil*, and converse not in the acquisition and pursuit of holy charity and religion.—*Quoted in Lange.*

Ver. 10. *War Theme:* THE CURSE OF COWARDICE. The God of peace would have us "follow peace with all men;" and the Prince of peace has pronounced, "Blessed are the peacemakers." But when the lusts of men are perpetually embroiling the world with wars and fightings; when avarice and ambition would rob us of our prosperity; when they would enslave the free-born mind by their usurpation and arbitrary power; when they would tear from our eager grasp Heaven's highest blessing, our religion—*what then is the will of God?* Must peace be maintained with perfidious and cruel invaders, at the expense of property, life, and religion? No; in such a time the Providence of God calls, "*To arms!*" The sword is then consecrated, and the art of war becomes part of our religion.

The Moabites, against whom this prophecy was denounced, were a troublesome and restless nation in the neighbourhood of the Jews, who, though often subdued by them, struggled to recover their power, and renewed their hostilities; by this and other sins their guilt rendered them ripe for execution. The Babylonians were commissioned to this work of vengeance, and they were bound to execute the commission faithfully, under penalty of a curse.

The text is a declaration of the righteous "curse" of God against a dastardly refusal to engage in war when it is our duty, or a deceitful, negligent discharge of that duty after we have engaged in it. This denunciation is levelled, like the artillery of heaven, against the *coward*, and against the *self-seeking*, as distinguished from the patriotic soldier.

I. Present a brief view of the circumstances which call us to war. Barbarities and depredations of Indian savages and French papists. Homes demolished, and families fleeing in consternation; the dead lie mangled with brutal wounds; others have been dragged away captives, made the slaves of imperious savages. Our frontiers have been drenched with the blood of our fellow-subjects. Our country bleeds at a thousand veins, and without our timely remedy the wound will prove mortal.

Is it not, therefore, our duty in the sight of God, a work to which He loudly calls us, to take up arms for the defence of our country? Certainly; and "Cursed is he who [without justifiable reasons] keepeth his sword from blood."

The man that can desert the cause of his country in such an emergency, whose blessings he has shared in times of peace, and whose sympathy and aid he shares in the day of distress, that cowardly, ungrateful man deserves the curse of both God and his country.

What greater evidence of *ingratitude* can be given than a supine neglect of the blessings the land enjoys, and a stupidly tame resignation of them into rapacious hands? Love of country and of religion calls us to action.

II. Show what is that deceitful performance of the Lord's work, or unreasonable keeping back the sword from blood, which exposes to His curse. If soldiers should unman themselves with debauchery instead of risking life for defence of country; if they shun instead of seeking out the enemy; if they consult what is safest and easiest for themselves and not for their country; when they prolong the war that they may the longer live and riot at the nation's expense; when they do not conscientiously exert all their power to repel the enemy and protect the state; then they "do the work of the Lord deceitfully," and His curse lights on them as their heavy doom. Let sobriety, public spirit, courage, fidelity, and good discipline be maintained among you.

But, besides soldiers, you are *sinners, and candidates for eternity.* We may never meet more. You are concerned to save your own souls as well as your country. Surely immorality and debauchery cannot better inspire soldiers with fortitude against the fear of death than prayer and a life of holiness. Such courage must be a brutal stupidity or ferocity, not the rational courage of a man or a Christian.

If free from these vices, *negative goodness is not enough to prepare you for death.* You must experience Divine grace; become humble penitents and true believers in Jesus Christ; must "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world." This is religion, which will inspire and befriend in conflict, and sustain you in death.

God grant you a safe return from the struggle, crowned with the laurels of victory.

But if the defence of *our country, in which we can stay but a few years at most,* be so important a duty, then how much more are we obliged to "seek a better country, even a heavenly," and to carry on vigorous *war against our spiritual enemies* who would rob us of our heavenly inheritance! Therefore, in the Name of "the Captain of our salvation," I invite you to enlist in the spiritual warfare. "Take to you the whole armour of God; quit you like men; be strong." And for encouragement, remember, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things," and enter a kingdom which cannot be shaken or assailed.—*Preached to the Militia by President Davies*, A.D. 1758.

Vers. 10, 11. *Theme:* CARNAL SECURITY. "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles."

For a considerable season Moab had been free from the inroads of war and

the terrors of pestilence; had, therefore, become so conceitedly secure, that the Lord said, "We have heard the pride of Moab," &c. (ver. 29). The *people* became vain, hectoring, and boastful, and mocked at their afflicted neighbours the Israelites, manifesting ungenerous joy in their sorrows (ver. 27). From this pride sprang luxury and all those other vices which find a convenient lair in the repose of unbroken prosperity. The *warriors* of Moab said, "We are mighty and strong men for the war;" as vainglorious sinners, they defied all law and power; trusting in Chemosh, they despised Jehovah, and magnified themselves against the Lord. The prophet compares that country to wine which has been allowed to stand unstirred and unmoved: it settles on its lees, grows strong, retains its aroma, and gathers daily fresh body and spirit. "But," saith he, "the day shall come when God shall shake this undisturbed liquor, when He shall send wandering bands of Chaldeans that shall waste the country, so that the bottles shall be broken and the vessels shall be emptied, and the proud prosperity of Moab shall end in utter desolation." The unusual repose of Moab had been the envy of the people of Israel, but they might well cease to envy when they understood how suddenly it should be overthrown.

That continued prosperity breeds carnal security is proved by the instance of Moab. In the first place, *this is the common mischief of ungodly men;* in the second place, this is *the frequent danger of the most godly.*

I. Carnal security is the common mischief of the unconverted, the godless, the prayerless, the Christless. Many have become like Moab. At ease from your youth, not "emptied from vessel to vessel," but settled upon your lees, and therefore careless and heedless.

1. This is so *common among the ungodly*, that the whole world was in this condition immediately before the great Deluge which destroyed the ancient race. We read that "they married and were given in marriage." They did eat and did drink, and were drunken even until the day when Noah entered into the ark, and the floods came and swept them all away. The preacher of righteousness for one hundred and twenty years warned them that their sins were become intolerable to Heaven, and that vengeance would surely be taken upon their devices, but they laughed the prophet to scorn. The world is so little changed to-day, that if the Lord Jesus Christ should now come, as come He will, "in such an hour as ye think not," He would find the mass of men still in the same condition. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man." This is the abiding state of the world which lieth in the wicked one: settled on its lees, it is not emptied from vessel to vessel, and therefore it dreams itself into presumptuous peace.

2. But from the world at large to *come to particulars.*

(1.) *The bold offenders who are at ease in open sin.* They began life with iniquity, and have made terrible progress in it. These men are not disturbed in their sins; their conscience has been seared as with a hot iron: things which others would tremble at are to them a jest; they make a mock at sin; they play with burning coals of lust and carry fire in their bosom, and boast that they are not burned. These are they of whom David said, "They are not in trouble as other men," &c. (Ps. lxxiii. 57). Read yonder handwriting on the wall, O despiser; and this is the interpretation thereof: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting; thy joy shall soon be taken from thee, and thy life also, and what shalt thou do in the day when the Lord requireth thy soul?"

(2.) *Men who give themselves wholly up to the world's business.* Such men, for instance, as one whom Christ called "Fool." You know the story: his fields brought forth plenteously, &c. He was a raiser of grain and a hoarder of gold, and nothing more. This is the end and object of the most of mankind. Gain is the world's *summum bonum*, the chief of all mortal good, the main chance,

the prime object, the barometer of success in life, the one thing needful, the heart's delight. And yet, O worldlings, Jesus Christ calls you fools. "Thou fool," said He; and why? Because the man's soul would be required of him; and then whose would those things be which he had gathered together?

(3.) *The man who forgets God and lives in slothful ease.* He is like the man who deposited the napkin and the talent in the earth, and was perfectly at his ease—a fair picture, indeed, of many who ought to be serving God; but they think they have little ability, and therefore do not strive even to do what they can. They are not openly sinful; they are quiet, easy-going, good-tempered souls, but the talent, where is it? Buried! Alas! it will have a resurrection, and when it rises, all rusty from that rotting napkin, what a witness will it bear, and how will the Master say, "Thou wicked and slothful servant!" The charge of sloth was quite enough. His doom was swift and terrible. It is not enough to abstain from outward sin, and so to be negatively moral; unless you bring forth fruits unto righteousness, you have not the life of God in you; and however much you may be at ease, there shall come a rough awakening to your slumbers, and the shrill sound of the archangel's trumpet shall be to you no other than the blast of the trumpet of condemnation, because ye took your ease when ye should have served your God.

(4.) *There are many in the professing Christian Church* who are in the same state as Moab. At the table of communion they sit with God's people. Their profession is a very comely one, and their outward conduct exceedingly honourable, yet they lack the inward spiritual grace. They have the virgin's lamp, but they have no oil in the vessel with their lamps; and yet so comfortable are these professors, that they slumber and sleep. Let not presumption hold you in its deadly embrace. Remember, you may think yourself a believer, and everybody else may think so too, and you may fail to find out your error until it is too late to rectify it. Be ye not, O ye professors, like Moab, that had settled upon his lees!

(5.) *The mass of moral men who are destitute of faith in Jesus.* They hear of the convictions and troubles of an awakened conscience, and they inwardly sneer at such fanaticism, and boast that they never stooped to such feelings. But those pangs, and throes, and tossings of a wounded conscience are signs of the dawn of spiritual life; it is by such things as these that we are led to put our trust in Jesus; and those who have never felt them may well lament before the Lord, and pray that they may experience them—that they may be brought soundly and safely out of their self-righteousness, and led to rest upon the finished work of the dear Redeemer. Better to suffer a present disturbance which will end in life, than enjoy the ease which is itself a protracted death. God give you to be saved through Jesus Christ!

II. Carnal security is the frequent danger of the most godly. A Christian may fall into a state of carnal security, in which he grows self-confident, insensible, careless, inactive, and worldly. The great disease of England is consumption, but I suppose it would be difficult to describe the causes and workings of consumption and decline. The same kind of disease is common among Christians. It is not that many Christians fall into outward sin, and so on, but throughout our Churches we have scores who are in a spiritual consumption—their powers are all feeble and decaying. They have an unusually bright eye—can see other people's faults exceedingly well—and sometimes they have a flush on their cheeks which looks very like burning zeal and eminent spiritual life, but it is occasional and superficial. Vital energy is at a low ebb: they do not work for God like genuinely healthy workmen; the heart does not beat with a throb moving the entire man; they go slumbering on, in the right road it is true, but loitering in it.

1. *The rapid results* of this consumption are just these: A man in such a state soon gives up communion with God.

His walk with God is broken and occasional. His prayers very soon suffer. By degrees his conversation ceases to be earnest for Christ. And now, strange to say, "The minister does not preach as he used to do;" at least the backslider says so. The reason is, that now there is little savour about the Word to him. Hymns which used to be delightful for their melody now pall upon his ears; while the prayers in which he used to join with so much fervency are very flat to him now. Very much of this sluggishness is brought on by long-continued respite from trouble.

"More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests rolling overhead."

2. *The great secret danger* coming out of all this is, that when a man reaches the state of carnal security he is ready for any evil. If the history of great offenders could be traced, it would be very much like this: they began well, but they slackened by degrees, till at last they were ripe for foul sin. Who would think that David, the man after God's own heart, should come to be the murderer of his friend Uriah, to rob him of his wife? O David! art thou so near to heaven and yet so near to hell? There is a David in every one of our hearts, and if we begin to backslide from God, we do not know to what extent we may slip.

3. *God's cure for this malady.* His usual way is by pouring our settled wine from vessel to vessel. If we cannot bear prosperity, the Lord will not continue it to us. Have you never dreamed that you were trying to walk and could not? You felt as though you could not move a foot—some one was about to overtake you who would do you serious mischief, and you longed to run and could not stir an inch. That is the state of mind in which we get when we would but cannot pray, when we would but cannot repent, when we want to believe and cannot, when we would give a world for one single tear, would almost pawn our souls to obtain a quiver of spiritual feeling, but were insensible still:—

"If aught is felt, 'tis only pain
To find 'I cannot feel.'"

Do you ever sink into that petrified condition? Can you be its victim and yet be happy? Betake yourself to earnest prayer. It will need God within us to keep us from such a tremendous peril.

See Addenda: TROUBLES REVIVE US.

4. *What ought we to do if we are prospering?* If God is prospering us, the way to prevent lethargy is—be very grateful for the prosperity which you are enjoying; do not pray for trouble—you will have it quickly enough without asking for it; be grateful for your prosperity, but make use of it. Do all you possibly can for God while He prospers you in business; try to live very closely to Him. Watch the very first symptoms of declining, and fly to Christ, the Great Physician. He will give you the balm of Gilead which will prevent the mischief, and you may bear the heats of prosperity as safely as the chill blasts of adversity.

But if you have fallen into such a state, *the one cure is the Holy Spirit.* Go to the cross of Christ again. Christian, if you have fallen from your first estate, go as you hope you went at first; go with your deadness, and sloth, and lethargy, and put your trust in the precious blood, and ask the Lord Jesus to fill you with the Spirit once again, that you may be renewed. Try to get a due estimate of your indebtedness to God's grace; try to see the danger of your lethargy; think more of eternity and less of time. Rend yourself away a little from your worldly engagements, if possible; put away your fancied security, and by strong crying and tears turn again to your former state of nearness to the living God.

Owing Thee so much, O Jesus! may we love Thee much in return, and be found faithful when Thou shalt come to reward Thy people and to be glorified in Thy saints. Amen.—*C. H. Spurgeon*, A.D. 1867.

Ver. 11. *Theme:* INDIFFERENCE TO ETERNAL REALITIES. "Moab hath been at ease from his youth."

I. True of men in the prime of life or in the decay of old age. The *high-born*, cradled in luxury, &c. No concern as

to things temporal or spiritual. "Soul, take thine ease," &c.

Multitudes of *men of business* and toilers in all grades of social life have "been at ease from their youth" touching their eternal interests. Conscience seared; no heed of the momentous truths of revelation.

II. Deplorable to see men "at ease" in the condition in which sin has placed them and the Gospel finds them. That condition is one of *guilt and condemnation*. In this condition the Gospel comes with declaration of free remission of all their sins through faith in Jesus Christ; yet states that, rejecting Christ's grace, the soul must die!

Guilt and condemnation are, therefore, *increased* when the Gospel is rejected; and yet men, despising salvation, are "at ease."

III. Apathy so serious, so appalling, calls for explanation. For men to be easy under condemnation, surely it bespeaks *Satan's influence* exerted on mind and heart (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

The explanation therefore of this ease and indifference is supernatural "*blindness.*" Danger seen or apprehended destroys thoughtless ease and stoical apathy. No sooner is a soul enlightened to its state and peril than the distressed cry rises, "What must I do to be saved?"

IV. Peace can be found only in Jesus. It is a peace solid, substantial, and abiding—the *fruit of faith*. Far different from the stolidity of Moab. Yet this divinely-given peace is *not mere quietude*. For the soul is aroused, active, earnest.

V. Under the very sound of the Gospel souls "sit at ease." The call is addressed, "Awake, thou that sleepest," &c., but they remain in death-like torpor. The warning, "Flee from the wrath to come!" is given, but they treat it as a false alarm. The invitation is presented, "Come unto Me," but they turn aside.

God regards such with special anger: "Woe to them that are at ease *in Zion*." They slight not the word of man, but of God. "I have called, but ye refused," &c. (Prov. i. 24, 26).

Careless souls, *rouse from your torpor. Why cry "Peace, peace! when there is no peace"?*—*Pledge's "Walks with Jeremiah."*

Comments.—Ver. 12. "I WILL SEND UNTO HIM WANDERERS," &c., lit., "*tilters*, who shall *tilt him up* and empty his vessels," *i.e.*, the Chaldeans, who would remove Moab from his settlements. "*His vessels*" are the cities of Moab. The "*broken bottles*" or pitchers alludes to *smaller* receptacles as well as the larger vessels, and suggests the destruction of "everything that has contained the wine of her political life, both small and great."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

Ver. 13. "ISRAEL WAS ASHAMED OF BETHEL." Israel had trusted in the calf-deity worshipped at Bethel (1 Kings xii. 27, 29; Hos. x. 15; Amos iii. 14; v. 5, 6; vii. 13), but Shalmanezer's conquest had put their trust to "shame." Even so would Moab become "ashamed" of Chemosh, their hope in his protection being refuted.

Ver. 15. "HIS CHOSEN YOUNG MEN ARE GONE DOWN TO THE SLAUGHTER." A text suitable for sermon on occasion of CALAMITY BEFALLING YOUNG MEN, or upon the theme SIN'S DESTRUCTIVE ACTION UPON THE YOUNG.

I. How appalling are the ravages of calamity or sin! "Gone down to *the slaughter*."

II. How unsuspecting is youth of perils and destruction! "Young men are *gone down*," not dreaming of the dire issue of their course.

III. How pitiless is evil to the preciousness of youth! Slaughters even "*chosen young* men!" *i.e.*, "the *choice* ones of his young men."

IV. How urgently should the young regard the warnings of danger! It was impossible for these "young men" to escape "slaughter" in going down to face the invincible Chaldeans. "Young men" may deem themselves strong—may scorn the perils which others see for them, and of which they warn them—but the world is full of dangers to youth!

Observe that this admonition of

coming doom to the reckless young men is spoken by "the KING whose name is the LORD of hosts."

Ver. 16. "CALAMITY IS NEAR TO COME, AND AFFLICTION HASTETH FAST." "Near" to the prophet's eye, although twenty-three years elapsed between the fourth year of Jehoiakim (when this prophecy was uttered) and the fifth year after Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem (when this prophecy was fulfilled).

I. God's warnings give time for preparation.

II. Justice, though slow, yet surely moves onward.

III. God's hand lingers to deal the fatal blow so long as there is possibility of amendment.

Ver. 17. *Theme:* BEMOANING THE SINNER'S DOOM. "All human glory is turned to shame, whether one *glorify himself*, as (according to ver. 14) Moab had done—to which the destruction of all his warlike power stands in strong contrast (ver. 15)—or *good friends and neighbours* praise us; for these may early and easily find occasion (ver. 16) to turn their song of praise into a lamentation."—*Naeg.*

"*Bemoan*"—not that Moab deserved pity, but this mode of expression pictures more vividly the grievousness of Moab's calamities.—*Jamieson.*

"*Know his name*"—peoples at a distance who had heard his name.

"*Strong staff*" — metaphorical of Moab's power, other nations having been oppressed and terrified thereby (Isa. ix. 4; xiv. 4, 5).

"*Beautiful rod*"—the splendour of the Moabite kingdom (Ps. cx. 2; Isa. xiv. 29; Ezek. xix. 11, 12, 14).

I. Human greatness brought to ruin. *Fame* reversed. *Dignity* humiliated. *Wealth* lost. *Influence* forfeited. *Virtue* squandered. *Noble powers* prostituted. *Fair promises of piety* falsified. *Precious character* degraded. *Immortal soul* lost. Oh, the wrecks of human greatness! Oh, the irretrievable loss of human purity! Oh, the eternal doom of impenitent souls!

II. A sinner's ruin helplessly bewailed.

1. *Friends*, near and afar, those "about him," and those "who know his name," intimate friends and more remote acquaintances, *can do nothing but lament!* Cannot *help*, yet can *weep*.

2. *The ruin of a noble life* is indeed *cause for bemoaning.* Who can tell the woe of the lost, the "weeping and gnashing of teeth"!

III. Outward glory utterly desolated.

1. *Strength* ("strong staff") and *beauty* ("beautiful rod") *win men's recognition and praise.*

2. *Outward virtues* (physical and extrinsic) do *not prove* the *possession of intrinsic worth* of character and spirit.

3. *External virtues are valueless* to God without piety.

4. *Men's admiration and praise* will not save a soul.

Ver. 19. *Theme:* THE FATE OF OTHERS A WARNING TO US. "Stand by the way and espy; ask him that fleeth and her that escapeth, What is done?"

The *pillar of salt* on the plains of Sodom was a warning to *individual sinners. Buried Nineveh* is a monumental admonition to *godless nations. Wretched homes* around us show the woe consequent upon *guilty indulgences. Embittered lives* testify of the miseries of iniquity, the delusion of the world's seductions, the falsity of sin's pleasure, that "it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God."

I. Admonitions are offered by the careers others pursue.

II. An observant eye will discern the consequences of wrong.

III. Miseries befalling others warn us to shun the cause.

IV. God writes lessons upon the lives men live that we may be wise.

V. Attention to human history proves the woe of ungodliness.

VI. Men need salvation from themselves—from their *sins*, which work their ruin; from their *self-glorying*, which shuts away the gracious help of God and the saving power of Christ.

Stand in the "public way" and see

what sermons the careers of men preach; "ask" individual sinners of the consequences of their indulgences and their impiety; then beware! See Ps. i.

Ver. 27. *Theme:* DERISION OF GOD'S PEOPLE AVENGED. Moab had exulted formerly over the calamity which befel the ten tribes (2 Kings xvii. 6) under the Assyrian Shalmaneser (Isa. xv. 6); now Moab rejoices over the fall of Judah under the Chaldean Nebuchadnezzar.

I. God takes up His people's cause as His own. See Obad. x. 13. *He* feels what they endure.

II. Wrong charges against the godly refuted by God Himself. Jehovah demands the justification of Moab's derision. What had Israel done to deserve it? Was he detected in nefarious conduct? had he consorted with evil conspirators? "Was Israel found among thieves?" See Zech. iii. 2.

III. Retribution comes back to evil-doers in kind. "Moab also shall be *in derision*" (ver. 26). He in his disaster shall be a derision to Israel. Oh, when sinners are overthrown in awful judgment at the end of the world, how will the *saints of God have cause to chide and scorn them* for their proud contempt of those whom God loved! See Moses' song over the defeated host of Pharaoh, Exod. xv.; also Israel's exultation over Babel as "Lucifer," Isa. xiv. 4–17; also the Church's rejoicing over Satan's fall, Rev. xii. 9–12; and the true Church of Christ over the apostate Church of Rome, Rev. xviii. 1–20.

Even so shall *God have scorners in derision* when calamity overtakes them. See Prov. i. 26–30. "I will *laugh* at your calamity," &c.

Ver. 28. *Theme:* A ROCK FOR SAFE HIDING. "*Dwell in the rock, and be like the dove.*"

Text part of prophecy concerning the overthrow and desolation of Moab. Yet she is warned to escape the impending danger, and shelter herself in the mountain fastnesses where the sword could not reach them.

I. Admire the compassion God displays.

1. *He warns before He smites.*

2. *He provides a shelter before the storm bursts.*

3. *He shows solicitude for those who disregard their own safety.*

II. Accept the security God provides.

1. *Distrust the safety which the world offers.* "Leave the cities."

2. *Dream of no security away from Christ.* "Dwell in the Rock."

3. *Hide in Him amid lowering storms.* "Come, my people, hide thyself as it were for a little moment," &c., Isa. xxvi. 20.

4. *Fear no future crisis when safe in Him.* Not death, nor the glorious return of Christ, &c.

III. Avoid the sins God condemns.

1. *Apathy and heedlessness.* "Moab at ease from his youth" (ver. 11). Light thoughts of sin. Careless of God's warnings.

2. *Self-sufficiency and self-righteousness.* "Heard of the pride of Moab," &c. (ver. 29).

3. *Procrastination and delay.* "Calamity is near" (ver. 16).

IV. Announce the tidings God declares.

1. *To those terrified by apprehensions.* Let them know there is a "*Rock*" for safe hiding.

2. *To those beguiled by false securities.* Urge them to "leave the *cities*" which they imagine safe.

3. *To those loitering amid gathering perils.* It is wise to seek Christ at once, and hide in Him.

4. *To those unsteady in their religious habits.* "*Dwell* in the Rock"—constantly, contentedly; and "be like the dove that maketh her nest"—"*Rest* in the Lord."

Ver. 28. *Theme:* FLEEING FOR REFUGE. "Oh, ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities and dwell in the Rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest by the side of the hole's mouth."

The uniformity of the principles of Divine government in providence and grace. It was an important part of

the duty of the prophets to foretell the overthrow of those kingdoms which opposed the Church of God. It was a source of consolation that the empires that persecuted the Church should themselves be finally swept from earth, that the way might be made smooth for the coming of Christ—"*the glory of His people Israel.*"

This prophecy was fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar, and the destruction of the chief cities of Moab took place, as Josephus says, five years after the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. That conqueror not only burnt the Temple of God, but poured the tide of his desolation and conquests over the neighbour nations, and Moab among the number. But when pursuing his own gigantic and ambitious designs, he little thought that he was accomplishing prophecies of which he had never heard—just as Herod and Pilate, in the Crucifixion of Christ, only fulfilled *what "God's own hand and counsel before determined to be done."*

I. **The parties addressed.** *Learn the compassion of God to the chief of sinners.* The inhabitants of Moab, whose calamity is foretold with so much compassion and tenderness; which teaches us that God exercises a gracious solicitude not only for friends but for enemies. For Moab was not a neutral state, but a hostile one—always in enmity and arms against the Church of God. Their country closely bordered upon the Holy Land.

But though such near neighbours and closely allied in blood, the Moabites were bitter enemies to the people of God. When Israel came from Egypt, Moab met them with no provision, and refused them a passage through their country. They hired Balaam to curse; they fought bloody battles with them; they held Israel in bondage in time of the Judges eighteen years; they rebelled against Israel under Ahab; they warred against Judah under Jehoshaphat; and when the ten tribes were led into captivity by Sennacherib, they mocked their miseries and danced for joy. "*For was not Israel a derision to thee? was he found among thieves? for since thou spakest of him thou skippest for joy.*" Yet Israel mourns their overthrow, and God here gives instruction and warning for their guidance—that they should escape the cities and enter the Rock.

1. Learn, then, that *God warns before He strikes,* and follows the wicked with warning upon warning and entreaty upon entreaty. Did He not forewarn the men of the old world one hundred and twenty years before the Deluge came on? Did He not wait till the iniquity of the Amorites was full before He swept them away? Did He not raise a long succession of prophets to foretell the destruction of Jerusalem? and is not Moab here warned of the approaching desolation? Was it not for rebellious sinners that God gave His own Son to die? Did not Jesus weep over Jerusalem? Is it not true that "*God willeth not the death of a sinner*"? Yet it is over these warnings and hindrances you pass on to destruction.

2. *The loss of a single soul is an object of mourning* to the Church of God, as the conversion of one sinner gives joy in heaven. What a harvest is burnt upon the ground! What a vintage is destroyed! "*O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee*" (ver. 32). Where are the tears fit to be wept?

II. **The direction given.** Heed the dangers of false security. "Leave the cities and dwell in the Rock."

In like manner God provides the refuge we need in the Gospel. He guards us against the evils of a fancied security; and would have us forsake all false refuges and enter the true. "*A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind.*" "*By two immutable things,*" &c., "*we have strong consolation who fled for refuge.*"

This affords *an argument for hope and security to the righteous.* If He show so much care and sympathy for enemies, how much more will He guard and bless His friends? If He find food for the raven, a shelter for the wild dove, and the shadow of a great Rock for guilty Moab, will He neglect His own children in their calamities, and leave them forsaken and shelterless under the storms of life? Did He not

provide succour for Naomi in Moab itself? Did not the angel supply Elijah with food at Horeb? Was not David preserved against the persecutions of Saul? Were not Hagar and Ishmael preserved for Abraham's sake? Better to be God's outcasts than the world's favourites. A portion with God's people is better than the best portion of the world. "*Their rock is not as our Rock*," &c. (Deut. xxxii. 31).

The cities were of man's building; the Rock was of God's providing; and David wisely said, "*Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.*"

This accords with all analogy. God furnishes relief, and finds the means of protection and shelter to all beings. No creature but is furnished with means of security and defence. He wings the angel, guides the sparrow, directs the young lion to its prey, and hears the ravens when they cry.

The weakest creatures have often the strongest shelters. The vine stays on the elm; the ivy clings to the tower; the worm hides itself in the sure and firm-set earth; the dove flies to the rock; and man seeks and finds his refuge in God. In religion the extremes of being meet. Human weakness and Divine strength; human folly and Divine wisdom; human insufficiency, Divine all-sufficiency.

III. The faith and trust to be exercised. "Be like the dove." The doves and wild pigeons in the East delight in cool and inaccessible places. They build their nests in cliffs and caverns overhanging fearful precipices, especially in clefts of the rock where the adventurous foot of man cannot tread. This is referred to by Homer, who tells us that, when frighted by the fowler, or by birds and beasts of prey, they are seen "*flying on the wings of fear to their hiding-place in the rocks.*" Voltaire says that Solomon makes him better acquainted with the customs of the East than Homer himself does. "*Oh, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs; let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice.*"

We can scarcely have a more beautiful description of *the simple exercise of faith and dependence* than this image supplies. Flying to the rock and resting there. The poor dove has no weapons of defence. She does not stay to fight with the vulture or contend with the fowler, but, relying on the swiftness of her wings, hastens to the rock, assured that once there she shall be safe.

Faith is the eye that discerns Christ, the hand that grasps Christ, the wing that flies to Christ.

The *constancy* of our trust and dependence. "*Dwell* in the Rock." It is not her place of shelter merely, but of permanent abode. "*He that* DWELLETH *in the secret place.*" "*That Christ may* DWELL." "*Arise, go to Bethel, and* DWELL *there.*"

IV. The infatuation to be deplored.

1. *Pride and self-sufficiency.* "We have heard of the pride of Moab." Everybody had—mentioned six times in this chapter. It is the distinction of impious men to have a hard heart under softening providences, and a proud heart under humbling ones.

2. *Beware of idolatry and creature confidence* (ver. 35).

3. *Beware of procrastination and delay;* of despairing of mercy.—*Rev. S. Thodey* (1856).

Ver. 29. *Theme:* VAUNTINGS OF PRIDE. "We have heard of the pride of Moab (he is exceeding proud)," &c.

I. Pride is the trumpeter of its own fame. "We have *heard*," &c. Proud people cannot rest unnoticed; they will "sound a trumpet before themselves"—as did the Pharisees—and make men know that they really do exist, and are of great consequence in the world.

"Pride is his own glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle."—*Shakespeare.*

"What is pride? A whizzing rocket,
That would emulate a star."—*Wordsworth.*

II. Pride has its grades of inflated grandeur. "He is *exceeding* proud." There are higher heights of vanity, as there are lower depths of infamy.

"Whatever sort beside
You take in lieu, shun spiritual pride!
A pride there is of rank, a pride of birth,
A pride of learning, and a pride of purse;
A London pride—in short, there be on earth
A host of prides, some better and some worse;
But of all prides, since Lucifer attaint,
The proudest swells a self-elected saint."
—*Hood.*

III. Pride manifests itself in numerous varieties of form. "Loftiness, arrogancy, pride, haughtiness." In *manner and bearing* — conceited: "loftiness." In imperious and unreasonable *exactions of attention and homage*— ostentatious: "arrogancy." In habitual *estimates of self as compared with others* —inflated: "pride." In feelings of *indifference to and contempt for inferiors* —cruel: "haughtiness."

There is a pride of *feeling*, of *speech*, of *action*; a pride of *possessions*, and a subtler pride of *profession* [to *be* or to *have* what is false]; a pride of *goodness*, of *greatness*, and even of *godliness*.

IV. Pride has its seat in a haughty heart. "The haughtiness of his heart." For "out of the heart proceedeth" every deformity. If a man's own heart could settle the question of his personal importance, each one of us would be too big for the world.

When Severus, emperor of Rome, found his end approaching, he cried out, "I have been everything, and everything is nothing!" Then ordering the urn to be brought to him in which his ashes were to be enclosed, he said, "Little urn, thou shalt contain one *for whom the world was too little.*"

But the "heart is *deceitful*;" and "whoso trusteth to his own heart is a *fool.*"

"Of all the causes which conspire to blind
Man's erring judgment and misguide the mind,
What the weak head with strongest bias rules
Is *pride*, the *never-failing vice of fools.*"
—*Pope.*

V. Pride provokes the scornful notice of God.

"I know his wrath" [or *insolence*], "saith the Lord." And God hates pride and *hot arrogance.* Because of pride *Nebuchadnezzar* was thrust from men's society, *Saul* was cast from his kingdom, *Adam* was driven from Paradise, *Haman* was expelled from court, and *Lucifer* hurled out of heaven.

VI. Pride meets at length its degradation and defeat.

"But it shall not be so; his lies shall not effect it;" *i.e.*, all his brawlings are emptiness and fallacies. God will bring to nought the plans of arrogant Moab, and lay his pride low in contempt.

"A proud heart and a lofty mountain are never fruitful."—*Gurnall.*

"As the first step heavenward is humility, so the first step hellward is pride Pride counts the Gospel foolish, but the Gospel always shows pride to be so."—*Mason.*

"His heart is black with pride.
He for himself hell's gate has opened wide,
For, weighed in God the All-Sufficient's scale,
Not claims nor righteousness or men avail:
But these are costly in His sight indeed,—
Repentance, contrite shame, and sense of need."
—*Oriental, tr. by Trench.*

Jeremiah adds to Isaiah's words descriptive of Moab's pride (comp. Isa. xvi. 6) other terms, indicating that the chastisement inflicted on Moab for his former arrogance against Israel had *not lessened his pride;* he was even more "lofty and arrogant;" therefore now his sentence of doom is weighted with heavier penalties.

Comments.

Vers. 32, 33. "*O vine of Sibmah,*" &c.

"So great was the general joy inspired by the vintage, that its cessation was one of the punishments denounced against Moab."—*Topics for Teachers.*

"*Their shouting shall be no shouting:*" for warriors shall tread down Moab in the battle-field, and change the joyous shoutings of vintners into the agonised cry of alarm.

Ver. 40. "*He shall fly as an eagle,*" *i.e.*, the Babylonian conqueror. Points of analogy:—i. The *rapidity* with which the eagle rushes on its prey. (See Hab. i. 8; 2 Sam. i. 23; Lam. iv. 19.) ii. Its peculiar habit of *expanding its wings* (see chap. xlix. 22), suggesting the spreading out of the Chaldean forces.

Ver. 42. "*Destroyed . . . because he hath magnified himself.*"

i. SELF-EXALTATION often impresses beholders with its show of *pomp, power,* and *permanence.*

ii. SELF-EXALTATION AGAINST GOD provokes His swift indignation and ultimate overthrow.

iii. SELF-EXALTATION therefore is but ANOTHER FORM OF SELF-DESTRUCTION. They who "magnify themselves against the Lord" do thereby seal their sure doom, for they alienate God's grace and invoke God's justice. (See *Addenda:* SELF-ESTEEM.)

Ver. 45. "*A fire shall come forth out of Heshbon.*" Not only will Ammon (of which Heshbon was the capital) refuse aid to Moab, but her ruin would start from thence. Historically it occurred that the Ammonites were conquered *before* the Moabites; and Nebuchadnezzar formed the plan of his campaign against Moab in Heshbon (ver. 2). Jeremiah here fitly appropriates and uses part of an old Mosaic triumphal poem (Numb. xxi. 27), made on Sihon's conquests over Moab. For Nebuchadnezzar would issue "as a flame from the midst of Sihon," just as formerly the Amorites had done.

Ver. 47. "*Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab.*" Josephus records how the Moabites were afterwards restored to their country (Antiq., xiii. 13, § 5, 14, § 2, &c.), though never to their former political importance.

Notes.—i. Moab is the SYMBOLICAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THOSE ENEMIES OF GOD'S CHURCH who are characterised by carnal strength, lustful passion, unholy haughtiness, sensual and cruel violence. —*Wordsworth.*

ii. Moab's restoration typifies and predicts GOSPEL BLESSINGS, *temporal and spiritual,* FOR THE GENTILES "in the latter days."

ADDENDA TO CHAP. XLVIII.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 11. *Troubles revive us.* Staying for awhile in the valley of Aosta, in Northern Italy, we found the air to be heavy, close, and humid with pestilential exhalations. We were oppressed and feverish—one's life did not seem worth a pin. We could not breathe freely, our lungs had a sense of having a hundred atmospheres piled upon them. Presently, at midday, there came a thunder-clap, attended by big drops of rain and a stiff gale of wind, which grew into a perfect tornado, tearing down the trees; then followed what the poet calls "sonorous hail," and then again the lightning flash, and the thunder peal on peal echoing along the Alps. But how delightful was the effect! How we all went out upon the verandah to look at the lightning and enjoy the music of the thunder! How cool the air and bracing! How delightful to walk out in the cool evening after the storm! Then you could breathe and feel a joy in life. Full often it is thus with the Christian after trouble. He has grown to be careless, lethargic, feverish, heavy, and ready to die, and just then he has been assailed by trouble, thundering threatenings have rolled from God's mouth, flashes of lightning have darted from Providence: the property vanished, the wife died, the children were buried, trouble followed trouble, and then the man has turned to God, and though his face was wet with tears of repentance, yet he has felt his spirit to be remarkably restored. When he goes up to the house of God, it is far more sweet to hear the Word than aforetime. He could not pray before, but now he leans his head on Jesus' bosom and pours out his soul in fellowship. Eternity now exerts its heavenly attractions, and the man is saved from himself.—*Spurgeon.*

Ver. 42. *Self-esteem.*

"Beware of too sublime a sense
Of your own worth and consequence.
The man who deems himself so great,
And his importance of such weight,
That all around, in all that's done,
Must work and act for him alone,
Will learn in school of tribulation,
The folly of his expectation."

—*Cowper.*

CHAPTER XLIX.

Critical and Exegetical Notes.—**1. Chronology of the Chapter.**—The prophecies against *Ammon*, *Edom*, *Damascus*, and *Kedar*. Vers. 1–33 are synchronous with the previous chapter, but the section (vers. 34–39) against *Elam* has its own date given, "In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah;" therefore seven years later than those preceding it, and coinciding with chaps. xxvii. 1, xxviii. 1, which see.

2. Geographical References.—Ver. 1. "Ammon." Their country lay north of Moab. "*Gad:*" the country west of the Ammonites, between them and the Jordan. Ver. 2. "*Rabbah:*" the fortified metropolis of Ammon. Ver. 3. "*Ai:*" an Ammonite city whose location is not known.

Ver. 7. "Edom:" their country stretched south of Judah. "*Teman:*" Jerome places it south of Idumea; Keil and Furst suggest N.E. of Edom. Ver. 8. *Dedan:* the name of an Arabian tribe bordering on Idumea. Ver. 13. "*Bozrah:*" see Gen. xxxvi. 33; 1 Chron. i. 44. Ver. 18. "*The neighbour cities*" of Sodom and Gomorrah were *Admah and Zeboim*.

Ver. 23. "Damascus:" Aram, called by us Syria, was divided into the northern part, of which "*Hamath*" was the capital; and the territory south-east belonging to "Damascus." "*Arpad:*" a Syrian city.

Ver. 28. "Kedar:" a wide range of country between the Red Sea and the Euphrates. *Vide* on chap. ii. 10. "*Hazor:*" a country contiguous to that of the Kedarenes—Arabia Deserta.

Ver. 34. "Elam:" The Elymais of the Greeks and Romans, forming part of the ancient Susiana, on the west of Persia, separated from Chaldea by the Tigris.

3. Personal Allusions.—Ver. 1. *Their king:* properly *Melcom* (see marg.): the tutelary idol (Zeph. i. 5). Jehovah was their true King; this Melchom or Moloch was a usurper-*king*. Ver. 27. "*Palaces of Benhadad.*" "Benhadad" was a common name of several Syrian kings, and should not be identified with the Benhadad of 2 Kings xiii. 3; Amos i. 4. (*Cf.* 1 Kings xv. 18).

4. Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 4. "*Thy flowing valley:*" or "thy valley *flows*," either with *abundance* or with the *blood of the slain*. Ver. 12. "*They whose judgment was not to drink:*" *i.e.*, whose *habit* or *experience*, &c. It was not God's people's *usual experience* to drink of the cup of His wrath.

Ver. 19. "*Against the habitation of the strong:*" rather, to the ever-verdant pasturage; for אֵיתָן means *durableness*, from יָתַן, to be *constant, perennial*.

Ver. 23. "*Sorrow on the sea:*" Many MSS. read "sorrow *like* the sea," changing ב for כ; and the corresponding passage in Isa. lvii. 20 reads "like the sea"—in which passage the sea is used for the agitations of men's hearts. Here it might mean, *sorrow in the agitated hearts* of the Syrians, for all the *versions* read "*in* the sea" in this text.

Ver. 25. "*How is the city of praise not left?*" rather, "Would that the city of praise were not abandoned!" So *Graf*. Damascus was "the city of praise" for its beauty.

HOMILIES ON VERSES OF CHAPTER XLIX.

Note on ver. 1. "*Hath Israel no sons?*" When the Ammonites seized Gad, on Israel's being carried into captivity by the Assyrians, they acted as if the country had no rightful heir, as if the banished ones should never return to claim their country.

Ver. 2. *Theme:* The Vanquished raised into Victors.

I. Scorners revel in Israel's overthrow. Seize on their treasures as spoil. Exult in their hopeless defeat. Profit by their temporary reverses.

II. The heritage of God's people is inalienable. Foes may appropriate it for a while, but Israel shall repossess her lost heritage, and her foes shall be abject.

III. Final triumph to the oppressed Church.

1. They who despoil *our peace* shall be overthrown.

2. They who arrogantly *appropriate the privileges exclusively belonging to the godly* shall be driven forth into desolation.

3. They who *make gain of our difficulties and sorrows*, which God permits for our chastening and profit, shall feel in due time the punishments of Heaven.

Or thus (as Naegelsbach suggests):—

I. The Church's lament over lost territory. Melcom's possession of Israel's inheritance. So now Mohammed's possession of the territory of the Christian Church in Asia and Europe. And,

in general, heathenism in possession of lands and hearts which should be held for Christ.

II. The Church's hope of ultimate repossession.

1. As to the overcoming of her opponents.

2. As to the reacquisition of the lost.

Ver. 7. *Theme:* FUTILITY OF HUMAN WISDOM.

Note.

i. The people of Teman had *an ancient and remote fame* for their wisdom (Gen. xxxvi. 15; 1 Kings iv. 30; Job ii. 11. Teman was the home of Eliphaz). Celebrated for their skill in dark sayings and proverbs.

ii. *Eminent sagacity affords no security against God's designs.* "Their wisdom vanished." Thus God puts to shame those who trust to "their own craftiness" (1 Cor. i. 19, 20).

Ver. 11. *Theme:* A FATHER'S DYING CONSOLATIONS. "Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive: and let thy widows trust in me."

I. A most affecting situation is supposed. "Fatherless and widows."

1. *Desertion*: their strong human helper gone!

2. *Bereavement:* who supply the place?

3. *Defencelessness:* who will be their safeguard?

4. *Anguish of spirit:* lonely, heart-stricken, home desolated!

II. A most consoling promise annexed.

1. *An exhortation precedes the promise.* "Leave," &c. An exhortation which breathes into the dying man the spirit of *Resignation.*

2. It is *an exhortation to confidence.* As he is compelled to leave them another POWER springs up to protect those dearer than life—confidence for himself—confidence for his family.

3. The exhortation is full of *Comfort.*

The latter clause addressed not to the dying man but to the widow—"let thy widows trust"—it binds up the heart of the desolate.

III. A most tender appeal is addressed. "Let thy widows *trust* in Me."

1. Trust the Divine *Faithfulness;* 2. the Divine *Tenderness;* 3. the Divine *Vigilance.*

IV. A most gracious service is guaranteed. "I will preserve," &c.

1. Keep them from evil.

2. Supply their wants.

3. Carry them through life.

4. Receive them to glory.

Ver. 11. *Theme:* COMFORT IN BEREAVEMENT. "*Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widows trust in me.*"

We must always regard it as a grand peculiarity of the religion that comes from God that it brings relief and comfort under trials for which the world has no balm, and throws light upon dispensations which would be otherwise clouded with a hopeless and impenetrable gloom. The religion of Jesus comes as a comforter when other oracles are silent; comes as a star of promise and of hope when every other lamp is extinguished; comes to breathe upon our ear its still small voice of mercy, when we hear nothing besides but the earthquake, and the fire, and the great and strong wind; and clothes with a mantle of celestial light the darkest appearances of this lower world.

I. The mournful changes of human life.

The text refers to the overthrow of Edom, to the calamities of war, to the domestic calamities produced by that event, and brings in the father of a family, about to leave his children for ever to the hard mercies of the world. Here are collected around you a sad group of sufferers — a dying father, mourning children, a widowed mother, addressed by a pitying and gracious God.

1. *Of these changes God proclaims himself the Author:* whether they come by war, by invasion, by pestilence, by famine, or by the ordinary progress of human decay, the hand of God is to be seen and acknowledged in them. "*I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him—the time that I will visit him. I have made Esau bare, he shall not be able to hide himself, his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not.*"

The worldling often views his calamities as coming unbidden and unblest, as contingent and casual, as evils which he must either resolutely resist or sullenly endure; and the consequence is that he either "despises the chastening of the Lord, or faints when he is rebuked of Him." But the Christian views them as coming from a Father's hand, for purposes which he may not be able to fathom, indeed, but which he certainly knows to be sent in love. The Christian knows no such Deity as Chance or Fate, and is at no loss to assign the Author of the trial. Afflictions fall upon mankind in a manner too regular for the agency of *chance*, but in a manner not stated and regular enough to have a blind Fatality for their author. They are not only consistent with God's love, but they actually flow from it.

This is the universal creed of the Church of God. Amos says, "*Can there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?*" Naomi: "*I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home empty.*" True, the famine was the procuring cause, and the anxiety of that period may have brought on diseases which swept her husband and her two sons into an untimely grave; but she sees the hand of God in all: "*The Almighty hath afflicted me; the Lord hath testified against me.*" What more uncertain than a casual flight of the arrow in the battle-field? But if *a certain man drew a bow at a venture*, his hand was strengthened by an Omnipotent Arm, and the arrow directed by an unerring Eye. What we term accident and casualty is in reality Providence accomplishing deliberate designs, but *concealing* its own interposition. What can be more trivial than the fall of a sparrow? But "*not one of these falls to the ground without your Father.*" And if a sparrow falls not without God, certainly one of His own children cannot. One is hurried away by a burning fever, one by a lingering consumption, one by some unforeseen accident, one by pestilence, one by war. But God says, "*I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him; the time that I shall visit,*" &c.

2. *From the prospect of these changes feeble human nature shrinks and recoils.*

Where is the father who does not tremble at the idea of leaving his children orphans and his home desolate? Where are the children who do not dread the thought of the hour when father and mother shall be removed from their embrace? Think of the picture drawn in the text—the anxiety of a dying father—the breaking-up of family ties—the darkened chamber—the silent home—the waking in the morning to a bereaved and forsaken world—and you bearing a weight of grief in your bosom, in comparison with which a mountain would be light.

Why do we refer to these points, but to *teach children to value the privileges they possess* in having parents to guide and protect them, and to *remind Christian parents of their high responsibilities* before it be too late. I can conceive that death will make strange revelations. The light of eternity which glares upon a death-bed, and shows the value of your own soul, may show you the value of the souls of your children, and your own responsibility to the God of the families of the whole earth.

II. **The compassion of a gracious God.** "Leave thy fatherless children."

God sympathises with all the fears, all the sorrows, and all the painful emotions of the human bosom. His POWER enables, His LOVE inclines, His FAITHFULNESS pledges Him to your guidance and direction. God, who has made the parent's heart what it is, knows how to meet its awakened susceptibility and care. God, who sends the calamity, knows how to send the support with it.

The history of the Church tells out wonderful instances of compassion to parents and children. Look at the first mission of an angel to a world; was it not to deserted and widowed Hagar before the birth of her first child? and was not the second visit of an angel to Hagar and Ishmael when the Lord heard the voice of the lad? Did not the angel descend to wrestle with Jacob when involved in trouble for his family, lest Esau come and smite the mother with

the children? Was it not to the widow of Zarephath Elisha was sent? Was not Elijah's greatest miracle employed on behalf of that pious mother mourning for her only son? Was not the Lord with Joseph when separated from his father? with Moses when left to the bulrushes? Look at our Lord's miracles.

III. The privilege of enlightened faith. Let your widows trust.

1. *Trust in the use of appointed means.*

2. Trust when outward means appear to fail.

3. When Providence appears to oppose promises.

4. When death and eternity are at hand.—*Rev. S. Thodey*, A.D. 1844.

Ver. 12. *Theme:* THE CUP OF SUFFERING FOR GODLY AND GUILTY. See Lit. Criticism on verse *supra*. If the godly are made to drink it, shall the ungodly escape? Will not Jehovah deal judgment to His people's foes?

I. *A fact for* Wonder: *God's people suffer punishment.* "Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken."

1. It is *not the ordinary experience* of God's people "to drink of the cup."

2. Yet it has *befallen Israel* that he has "assuredly drunken." God's people are sometimes severely chastened.

3. The *good among the people* suffered with the disobedient. For there were many pious and righteous men in Israel who zealously strove to keep the nation from apostasy, as with Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah; yet they were entailed in the griefs of exile.

II. *A fact full of* Admonition: the ungodly shall not escape punishment. "Art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? Thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it."

1. How can *the wicked expect to escape* when the people God loves are made to suffer for their faults?

2. The affections of the righteous are *purifying*, but those of the guilty are *punitive*.

3. Surely it may be expected that God will *be lenient with and forgive His sons* sooner than aliens.

4. If the godly are banished from their land and life's privileges for their wrong, shall not the "wicked be turned into hell," and be banished from all the covenant favours of Heaven?

Note—

(*a.*) The cup of affliction is placed in the hands of us all.

(*b.*) None can claim to be exempted because of his covenant relationship.

(*c.*) The Christian's natural enjoyment of grace leads to surprise when the cup is placed in his hands.

(*d.*) Yet the justice which will not spare the beloved child forewarns the rebel of certain punishment of wilful sin.

Ver. 16. *Theme:* FORTIFIED AGAINST GOD'S POWER. "*Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock,*" &c.

I. Such startling boastfulness against God can be *accounted for* only as *resulting from* remarkable delusions.

A soul must have become strangely elevated in mood and defiance to be capable of such arrogance. Men often *wish* themselves protected from the reach of God's power; but few indeed ever become so deluded as to *believe* and to *boast* that they are so protected. What explains it?

1. *Arrogance fostered by successes.* "Thy terribleness hath deceived thee; *i.e.*, at first the fear inspired into others by her power rendered her proudly confident, as if none would dare to assail her; for success and sway over others tend to foster this inflated sense of importance and power. Beware of the "*deceiving*" influence of success and power!

2. *Vanity*, which *fed itself upon the obsequious subjection of others.* "The pride of thy heart." And such vanity grows as it is gratified.

3. *Self-created resources of strength and security.* "Clefts of the rock—the height of the hill." Sinners build their houses against the coming flood, and think themselves safe in them.

II. It is a frequent affort *of irreligious men* to fortify themselves against the reach of God.

1. Against the *reverses of His providence.* So they place their fortune in safest securities, in various sure undertakings, in order to have a guarantee that, should one fail, they will be right with the rest. Thus they plan that "riches shall *not* take to themselves wings and fly away."

2. Against the *afflictions* of His hand. They choose healthy localities for their houses, with every sanitary appliance for the security of health. They command ablest physicians in illness. They seek the most salubrious and invigorating climates for the different seasons of the year. They command every luxury and comfort for the ease and security of life.

3. Against the *agencies of death.* They "make their nest as high as the eagles." They climb up away from the grim shadow—take great pains to elude the last enemy.

4. Against the *penalties of sin.* Give money in their wills to religious societies, as a bribe to their consciences. Leave wealth to Popish priests to pray their souls out of purgatory. Fortify themselves in *atheism* or *rationalistic theories,* to satisfy themselves that there is no penalty for sin, or no hereafter.

III. God's mighty hand will be laid upon even the proudest boaster.

1. *Misfortunes* pursue men in all their sure retreats.

2. *Death* mounts over all "rocks," climbs up into all "nests."

3. *Terror will seize* and shatter the confidence of *every sinner* in the day of God's righteous judgment.

4. There will be an awful "*bringing down*" *of the lofty* when the Almighty puts forth His hand to destroy men's "refuges of lies." See Isa. ii. 11–17; Rev. vi. 15.

Note—There is a cleft of a *Rock* in which the soul may securely hide.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!"

Ver. 19. "*Like a lion from the swelling of Jordan.*" See Homily on chap. xii. 5, and Notes on chap. iv. 7.

Ver. 23. *Theme:* THE SEA: ITS RAVAGES AND TRAGEDIES. "*They have heard evil tidings: they are faint-hearted, there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet.*"

I. The sea has its stories of heart-rending disaster.

II. The stories of the sea's ravages fill us with trembling and grief.

III. The perils of the deep witness to the awful power and presence of God.

IV. How urgently should prayer be made for and by those who traverse the ocean.

"When through the torn sails the wild tempest is streaming,
When o'er the dark wave the red lightning is gleaming,
Nor hope lends a ray the poor seaman to cherish,
We fly to our Saviour:—'Save, Lord, or we perish!'

"O Jesus, once rocked on the breast of the billow,
Aroused by the shriek of despair from Thy pillow,
Now seated in glory, the mariner cherish,
Who cries in his anguish, 'Save, Lord, or we perish!'

"And oh, when the whirlwind of passion is raging,
When sin in our hearts its wild warfare is waging,
Then send down Thy grace Thy redeemed to cherish;
Rebuke the destroyer:—'Save, Lord, or we perish!'"

—*Heber.*

V. The sea's wildest tumult is under the control of God. "It cannot be quiet," says this text: but once over the furious sea, where terror-stricken men dreaded death, Jesus sent out His word—and "there was a great calm." "Then are they glad because *they be quiet;* so He bringeth them to their desired haven" (Ps. cvii. 28, 29).

Comments.

Ver. 27. "PALACE OF BENHADAD:" whence so many cruelties against Israel emanated: thus indicating the *reason* for the overthrow of Damascus. *God traces guilt to its source!*

Ver. 29. "CRY, FEAR IS ON EVERY SIDE." Jeremiah's watchword again, "Magor-Missabib:" *cf.* chap. xx. 3,

10; Ps. xxxi. 13. The mere "*cry*" of the foe—"Fear," &c., shall discomfort the Kedarenes.

Ver. 31 "ARISE, GET YOU UP UNTO THE WEALTHY NATION," &c.

Notes—

i. They who possess worldly plenty *do not have all advantages on their side*, for their "wealth" *courts the envy of the covetous* and the *assaults of the spoiler*.

ii. An *easy self-security* lays men open to the invasions of trouble and loss. Better to be secure in Christ, "your life hid with Christ in God," than to enjoy a fancied security in the wealth and possessions of earth.

Ver. 34. "THE WORD OF THE LORD AGAINST ELAM." "In the cuneiform inscriptions we find the Elamites in perpetual war with Nineveh, with whom they contested possession of the country of Rasi (probably the country mentioned in Ezek. xxxviii. 2, xxxix. 1). With Babylon, on the contrary, they were on friendly terms, and they appear perpetually as the allies of Merodach-Baladan and his sons in their struggles for independence. The suggestion, therefore, of Ewald, that they served as auxiliaries in the Chaldean army in the expedition which ended in the fall of Jehoiakim and the deportation of Jeconiah and the best of the land to Babylon, is not improbable, though there is nothing to justify us in laying to their charge any extraordinary cruelty."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

"When the monarchy of Persia was established under Cyrus, Elam was blended into and formed a part of it; but before that time they were two distinct kingdoms. According to the present prophecy, Elam is spoken of as having actually become a province of the Babylonish empire (Dan. viii. 2); and Daniel appears to have presided over it, having Shushan for the seat of his government."—*Dr. Blayney.*

Ver. 38. "I WILL SET MY THRONE IN ELAM:" God would show Himself the Ruling and Omnipotent King by His judgments there.

Ver. 39. "IN THE LATTER DAYS, I will bring again the captivity of Elam." The full restoration belongs to Gospel times: and "Elamites" were among the first who heard and accepted the Gospel. Their presence at the Pentecost shows that the Elamites were still preserved by the Divine Providence, and were there among the representatives of the Gentile world to whom the Evangel of Christ was proclaimed.

CHAPTER L.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—1. **Chronology of the Chapter.**—This and the following chapter constitute one prophecy against Babylon; and the date of its authorship is given in chap. li. 59: "the fourth year of Zedekiah." Jeremiah delivered this written prophecy to Seriah, the king's chamberlain and Baruch's brother (*cf.* chap. xxxii. 12), who accompanied Zedekiah the king to Babylon, probably at Nebuchadnezzar's summons, for some imposing state occasion: the prophet's design being to send to the exiles there His message concerning the overthrow of the Chaldean power and their return from captivity.

2. **National Affairs.**—Jeremiah was at this time dwelling in Jerusalem (ver. 5, lit. "*kitherwards*," not as in E.V., "*thitherwards*," the writer being in Jerusalem), yet he regards the city as already captured and in ruins (vers. 11, 15, 17, 28, &c.), while the exiles at Babylon, taught by their sorrows and misfortunes, are seeking their God in penitence (vers. 4–7). But the expressions are all *general*, there are none of those minute touches which would certainly have been found had the city and temple been actually destroyed (*Dr. Payne Smith*). The exact position of affairs will be apparent by reference to Notes *in loc.* to chap. xxix. Comp. also Topic, "*Prophecy vindicated in Babylon's Fall*" (on chap. xxv. 13), p. 473.

3. **Personal Allusions.**—Ver. 2. "*Bel*," the principal deity of Babylon, and "*Merodach*" (which means in Syria, *little lord*), another idol-god.

Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 5. "*Their faces thitherward:*" but הֵנָּה uniformly mean. *hither*: they look "hither" from scenes of exile.

Ver. 9. "*A mighty expert man.*" The pointing of the word מַשְׂכִּיל, *maschil*, appears in most of the authorities; therefore is rendered *expert;* but some editions read מַשְׁכִּיל, *mashchil*, *a destroyer*, or *prosperous.*

Ver. 12. "*Your mother:*" אִמְּכֶם is the *metropolis* of the empire, Babylon.

Ver. 17. "*Devoured him . . . broken his bones.*" Rather, "*The first*, even the king of Assyria, *ate him* (imagery of a *lion* being kept up), and *this last*, even Nebuchadnezzar, hath *picked his bones.*" For Israel was so wasted by Assyria, that Nebuchadnezzar had but the bones to pick.

Ver. 21. "*Marathaim.*" Marg. "the rebels;" but מְרָתַיִם is *doubly rebellious* it is a *dual* form, intended as an intensitive, and conveys the sense of *the very rebellious land.* "*Pekod*" signifies *visitation.*

Ver. 31. "O thou most proud." Lit. *O Pride;* God calls Babylon by that name, זָדוֹן.

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER L.

Babylon's Predicted Overthrow: Israel's Sure Redemption

Introductory considerations—

i. *Why was Babylon's fall announced?* That the exiles there might cherish *hope* in their captivity and nurture *faith* in Jehovah as still working out purposes of mercy for His covenant people. Comp. "*The Theocratic Purpose of the Captivity,*" p. 472.

ii. *What was the power which should effect Babylon's overthrow?* "A nation cometh up against her from *the north*" (ver. 3). The Median power, which Cyrus successfully led against Babylon (see Topic, "*Sheshach,*" ii. 2, p. 475). As Judah's overthrow by Babylon had always been predicted "from the north" (chap. i. 14), now, in turn, Babylon's overthrow is to be by a power "from the north." The north is the region where the sun never shines, and emblematical, therefore, of *severity and gloom.* The Medo-Persian empire was an aggregation of small nationalities welded into unity by Cyaxares (B.C. 633).

iii. *In what light is Babylon's ruin to be regarded?* Comp. "*The Supernatural Termination of Babylon's Power,*" p. 472. Her work was done; and, as being a graceless and arrogant power, God destroyed it when it had served the end for which He created and prolonged it. For though Babylon worked out God's designs in Judah's punishment, it was not done by her in recognition of Jehovah and His will, but in *violent lust of empire*, and in *disregard of the sanctity* of Zion's holy things.

iv. *How would the exiles greet this prediction?* Surely it would call them to the *repentance and re-allegiance* to God which Jeremiah describes (vers. 4, 5), and foster in them a *patient waiting* for the hour of their promised redemption, and restrain their souls from Babylon's idolatries by fixing *their expectation and trust* in Jehovah.

Observation.—The fate of Babylon is homiletically treated in chap. xxv.; hence in these two chapters the general theme will be left, and only verses selected for homilies.

HOMILIES ON VERSES IN CHAPTER L.

Ver. 4. *Theme:* Weeping Pilgrims. "*Going and weeping; they shall go and seek the Lord their God.*"

i. The Return. "Going." In *part fulfilled* when some few of the ten tribes of "Israel" joined Judah in a "covenant" with God at the restoration of Judah to their own land (Neh. ix. 38, x. 29). *Its full accomplishment* is yet to come (chap. xxxi. 9; see Homilies on "The Watchmen's Call" and "Pilgrims to Zion," pp. 518, 519. Comp. also Hos. i. 11; Zech. xii. 10). Its *constant* fulfilment is realised in souls returning to the Lord in prayer, penitence, and faith.

ii. The Tearful Journey. "Weeping." With *sorrow* at the remembrance

of their sins and sufferings (Ezra iii. 12, 13; Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6). With *gladness* at their restoration, after so long a delay, and in a manner surpassing all hope.

iii. THE DIVINE GOAL. "Seek the Lord their God." More a going back *in heart* to *Him*, than a mere geographical return to their land. A *happier* goal that than to a ruined country; for the *goal of piety*, "The Lord," is a better and more blessed one than the goal of *patriotism*—a wasted country. God is more to the ransomed soul than Zion!

Vers. 4, 5. *Theme:* SINNERS RETURNING TO GOD.

Evident that the verses allude to the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. But as they interestingly describe what is manifest in the return of sinners to God, we will use them to illustrate such a circumstance.

I. Penitents going in company. "In those days the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together."

There had been much dissension and great enmity between these tribes from the days of Rehoboam (see 1 Kings xii.); but it had been foretold that they should again unite, and here we behold them coming "*together*." Thus it is with sinners in submitting to the teachings of the Holy Ghost and yielding to divine influence.

Whatever was the distance, whatever the enmity existing between them before, now, as with one accord, they come together to the house of God, to the throne of grace, to the Saviour of mankind. See Eph. ii. 13, 14.

II. Sinners returning with weeping. "Going and weeping."

What an affecting sight! Whence have they come? Why do they weep? Whither are they going? They have left the land of their captivity, where they were aliens from God, servants to idolaters, slaves to their enemies; they have left the ways of sin, the company of the wicked, the service of the devil. Behold them *going*.

As they go they weep: not from regret that they are leaving scenes and circumstances to which they have been so long habituated, but rather because they remained connected with them so long. They are affected by a sense of God's goodness to them and by a consciousness of their ingratitude towards God; they weep on account of their sins, and the proof of their sincerity is manifest in their movement; for as they weep *they go;* they leave their former sinful situation, *and they are going.*

III. Souls returning to the Lord. "To seek the Lord their God."

The children of Israel and of Judah had wandered from Jehovah, the true God, the God of their fathers; they had provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, especially by the folly and the infamy of *idolatrous* practices, and God had left them for a while *captives* in the hands of *idolaters*. But mixing mercy with judgment, He remembered them in their low estate; and here we find them again seeking the Lord their God.

Sinners *may* wander from God, but misery, infamy, and ruin will be the consequence; they *must* return again to God or perish. And they *may* return; for oh! how kind are the words of the Lord our God, of Jesus our Saviour, to weeping returning sinners! "Ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with your whole heart" (Jer. xxix. 13).

IV. Seekers asking direction. "They ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward."

Zion was the city of solemnities among the Jews, and God was peculiarly present there. But Zion means the Church, and it is in His *Church* that God may always be found. So Jesus our Saviour promises. Agreeably to this, "*they* ask the way to Zion;" and as a proof that this is not an idle inquiry, they ask "*with their faces thitherward.*" Their dispositions are turned toward God and His people; their souls are inclined to religion and its ways.

Thus disposed, they next resolve, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten."

They had been joined to idols, to sin, to wickedness. But now they say, "Come let us join ourselves to the Lord."

The way to join ourselves to the Lord is, *spiritually*, by faith and by love; *outwardly*, by connecting ourselves with the Lord's people—with those who worship God in spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.—*Altered from "Sketches of Sermons."*

Ver. 5. *Theme:* DIRECTIONS TO INQUIRERS. "*They shall ask the way to Zion, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord.*" The evidences of a state of grace are the same in all ages. The thought of the numbers in heaven and the numbers on the way to it may well encourage us.

Text said of Israel in Babylon, but said spiritually of seekers in every age.

Perhaps never a day since first promise in which there has not been some inquirer to heaven.

"*We are compassed,*" *etc.* It is always instructive to mark the peculiar and characteristic distinctions of the people of God. Though there are some things in which they *differ*, there are many in which they *agree*. *Unity* without *uniformity*.

There may be circumstantial differences between Moses and Joshua, Paul and John, Martha and Mary, Peter and Nathaniel, but they yet possess a oneness of character. All love Christ; love prayer; love the Word of God; love the fellowship of the Gospel. "*All drink into the same Spirit.*"

Our text exhibits some of these, and we shall set before you—

I. Some of the marks and characteristics of the pilgrims to Zion. "Arise, let us go up to Zion." *Earnestness, Union, Effort.*

1. *By their earnest inquiry.* "They inquire the way to Zion with their faces thitherward." Supposes *Desire, Ignorance, Docility, Resolution.*

As when the bondage of Israel was broken they began to turn homewards, so when the soul is truly converted to God it begins to turn heavenwards. "*Arise ye,*" *etc.*

The soul truly awakened is no longer content to sleep in sin, to linger upon the brink of perdition, to remain under the sentence and condemnation of a broken law, but determines to seek salvation and escape the wrath to come. "*I will arise.*"

Paul inquires, "*What wouldst Thou have me to do?*" Peter inquires, "*Lord, to whom shall we go but to Thee?*" The jailor inquires, "*What shall I do to be saved?*" Balak inquires, "*Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?*"

Depend upon it, it is a great era in any man's history when *he feels himself wrong*, becomes *aware* of his *danger*, has strong *convictions awakened*, *sees* his need of a *Saviour*, feels for the first time the powers of the world to come, and earnestly resolves to make the care of his soul the first concern.

But it is of great consequence that he should at once act upon his convictions. These inquired with "their faces directed thitherward." *Not ask the way to heaven and set their faces to the world; not set their faces to heaven and go on at a venture without asking the way; but in all true converts there is both a sincere desire to attain the end and a constant care to keep the way.* Guard against trifling with convictions. Pray that they may be deepened and confirmed, that you may be enabled to act upon them, that they may issue in sound conversion.

2. *By their penitential regrets.* "Going and weeping."

They weep that they have been in bondage so long, that their best days have been devoted to folly and sin, that so few are found walking with them, that the way is so rough, the difficulties so great, and that they find so many traces and footprints of returning feet—of those who professed to set out on pilgrimage, but whose hearts were not right. The open enemies of the way do not discourage so much as the false friends of the way (Ps. lxxviii. 8–11).

Repentance awakens a godly *sorrow for sin past*, a painful *sense of sin present*, our remaining corruption, and a holy jealousy and *distrust of ourselves for the future*, lest, like Lot's wife, we look back, or, like Israel, in heart go back (Ps. li. 12).

3. *By their mutual solicitude and concern.* "Come and let *us*." Roused themselves, they long to rouse others.

Religion delights in unity and association. It consecrates the social principle by bringing it in aid of our own and others' piety. The charity of religion when it begins at home does not end there. One of the first indications of piety is a concern for the salvation of others (John i. 41). "*Andrew first findeth his own brother.*" Like lighted torches spread the flame.

He who can forego the *communion of saints* will probably very soon be able to resign *communion with God.*

4. *By their solemn and determined consecration to God.* "Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant."

"My *understanding* shall be His to know Him; my *will* His to choose Him; my *affections* His to love Him; and all my *active powers* His to serve and honour Him."—*Bishop Beveridge.* Williams of Kidderminster records:—"I solemnly devoted and dedicated myself to Him who is the King of kings, resolving by His grace to give a full divorce to all manner of sins, and to the utmost of my power to strive and wrestle with all temptations to sin, whether from without or within; to avoid the society of vain and graceless persons; to commend myself to God by prayer at least twice a day; to be careful and constant in self-examination and meditation; particularly to meditate on the love of God in Christ, and of Christ in willingly offering Himself a sacrifice for poor sinners, and in sending the blessed Spirit, whose strivings and quickening motions I resolved, by the grace of God, never to quench. I resolved to watch narrowly against the wanderings and strayings of my heart in any duty; to make the glory of God and the salvation of my soul my chief business and design; and to account the affairs of this world but as diversions to me in my way heavenward. I determined to call myself to account for the actions of the day, and frequently to write remarks thereon. This was of excellent use to keep me close to God and duty to prevent sin; it helped me to redeem precious time, making conscience of rising betimes for communion with God."

II. Directions to those who are desirous of walking in this way.

1. *Solemnly consecrate yourself to God.* "Join yourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant," &c.

2. *Carefully study the directions for the way.* "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet." Here your course is clearly marked out all the way from the city of destruction to the heights of Zion.

The uses of the Bible read and heard are to convince of sin, to convert to Christ, to confirm in grace, to conduct to glory.

As ever you would profit by a sermon or a chapter, follow it with the tears of repentance and the prayers of faith. Remember that the Bible without its Inspirer's illumination is like a dial without sunshine.

3. *Keep close to your Guide.* Jesus says, "I am the way." He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Honour Christ in His prophetical office as He who loosens the seals and opens the Book, and throws light on the dispensations of God, and guides and guards the Church from earth to heaven.

Peter followed, but followed afar off.

4. *Do not separate yourselves from your godward companions.*

5. *Keep the end constantly in view.*—*S. Theodey*, 1842.

Vers. 4, 5. *Theme:* YOUNG CONVERTS STARTING ZIONWARD.

I. God reconciled to them in grace is the object of their inquiry.

II. *It is usual with inquirers to* associate with those who are like-minded with themselves.

III. *This inquiry after God and happiness is* frequently accompanied with tears.

IV. Mount Zion is the place to which they will repair *for instruction and comfort.*

V. *Devout and sincere inquirers will* gladly avail themselves of the direction and counsel of Christian *ministers* and of other pilgrims who have made some advance in the way to the celestial city.

VI. Young converts, *having found God*, to their unspeakable satisfaction, *will do well to* "join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."—*Rev. R. Frost*, Dunmow, 1833.

Note—

"The fall of Babylon is to be immediately followed by the return of the exiles homewards in tearful procession because they go as penitents, and yet with joy because their faces are towards Zion. The cessation, moreover, of the schisms between Israel and Judah is one of the signs of the times of the Messiah (Isa. xi. 12, 13), and symbolically represents the gathering together of all the discordant and warring empires of the world under the peaceful sceptre of the Church's King."—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Ver. 6. *Theme:* THE SOUL'S RESTING-PLACE. "*They have forgotten their resting-place.*"

The prophet speaks of the captivity of Israel in language of plaintive and poetic beauty: "My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray; they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting-place." Jehovah had now come to seek and save them, and the first evidence that He is among them is that they return penitent to Him. As the lost child that has run hither and thither in the crowded streets, seeking in vain the parent from whom she has wandered, crying herself sick in the bitterness of her sorrow, does at the sight of the mother coming to her relief rush to her embrace, so the Jewish nation rose repentingly to meet God as He drew near, saying with earnest and devout enthusiasm, "Come and let us join ourselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten" (ver. 5). To take the text in a spiritual sense is not accommodation, but interpretation, for all this was designed to present a striking analogy to the case of the sinner and his Saviour. Viewed in this light, the text suggests—

I. That the human soul needs a resting-place.

This is true of the soul—

1. *In innocence.* As a creature he could not but be dependent. Without unquestioning trust in God, safety and happiness were impossible to man even before the Fall.

2. How much more true is this since man has become *a sinner!* To the sense of dependence there is now added the restlessness of a rebel, whose conscience is carrying a load it cannot shake off, whose intellect is revolving questions it cannot solve, whose heart is crying out for love that shall be worthy of its acceptance, and for an object that shall be worthy of its love. His nature is utterly weary. The past is guilty, the future is hopeless, and so the present is restless. Have you never sought to hide yourself from God and from yourself in business, pleasure, excitement, because of a consciousness of guilt, even as Adam attempted to hide himself amid the trees? You become yourself the spectre that haunts your heart, and you carry yourself for ever with you. Never, therefore, until yourself is changed can you enter into an unfailing resting-place.

II. Jesus Christ is the resting-place the soul needs.

The deliverance from the power of sin and the effects of sin can alone remove the soul's distress. In Christ we have—

1. *Full redemption.* He took upon Himself our sins and redeemed us from the curse of the law, so that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Him." No anodynes of earth can give the soul the rest that the blood of Christ can. What the words of men could not do the voice of Jesus has accomplished; for when He has said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace," the heavings of the troubled heart have been stilled, as of old the rolling waves of Galilee subsided at His command.

2. In Him we also have *regeneration.* "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." A new centre has been given to his heart, a new aim to his life, a new joy to his experience. In his heart

Christ has opened a fountain that quenches his thirst for evermore.

3. He gives *repose* to the *intellect*. Christ is "the truth." Jesus Christ alone brings to the soul the element of certainty, and, worn out by vain flights, it folds its weary wings and rests with quiet thankfulness on this tree of knowledge, which is also the tree of life.

4. He also gives *repose to the affections* of the soul. Earthly objects prove disappointing or fall away from us, or are torn from us and leave the soul all palpitating with agony, but no power can separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Earthly objects cannot last through the soul's immortality, but Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and the repose that Christ brings is as everlasting as Himself.

III. The text implies that this resting-place of the soul is sometimes forgotten, even by those who have known and enjoyed it.

"My people have forgotten their resting-place." This place can be attained even on earth by Christians. Paul, amid the damp and darkness of his prison, exclaimed, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep what I have committed to Him against that day." Eminent Christians in all ages, &c. But a Christian may frequently have his peace in Christ disturbed. At moments he may be walking through darkness. Job was a true man of God even when he was crying out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" True, a Christian is not justified in being in this distressed state of mind.

When does a Christian forget his resting-place?

1. When he falls into perplexity, doubting whether he is forgiven or not.

2. When he depends upon merely human and earthly resources.

3. When he loses his confidence in the midst of affliction.

Are there those here who have never known this resting-place? Let them seek it now. Come to Christ—

"Take Him for what He is; oh, take Him all,
And look above.
Then shall thy tossing soul find anchorage
And steadfast peace;
Thy love shall rest on His, thy weary doubts
For ever cease;
Thy heart shall find in Him and in His grace
Its rest and bliss."

—*Rev. W. M. Taylor, D.D., New York.*

Ver. 6. *Theme:* ROAMING FROM GOD.

i. However unlike in all other choices and courses of action, men alarmingly concur in this, to neglect religion, forsake the fountain of happiness. "They have *gone from mountain to hill*, they have *forgotten their resting-place.*"

ii. We find no exception to this rule *apart from individual cases in which Divine grace has worked a distinction.* As in Nature we never find a stone ascend upwards or a river flow backwards of its own accord, so in the moral world we *never find* men preferring eternity to time, holiness to sin, the Creator to the creature *of their own accord.*

iii. Wherever this wrong tendency is found *superseded by a supreme attachment to heavenly things*, we are sure that this new bias owns a heavenly agency.

These Jews in Babylon wandered from hill to hill, from religion to religion, from comforter to comforter, from one broken dependence to another, but never by any chance wandering back to God.

I. God is the proper rest of the human spirit.

1. Every created life *requires some object of hope and trust.*

2. The dire effect of human depravity is *to separate us from God*, and to prompt us to *seek some other rest.*

3. Actually *to know and enjoy God* is the triumph of personal and experimental religion.

II. A tendency to forget and forsake God lies at the root of all our miseries.

It plunged Israel into captivity; it exposes us to ruin.

1. This is literally true of *the whole world of sinners.* We have all "forgotten our resting-place."

2. This is practically true of the whole world of *saints*—the source of their miseries. Not absolute forgetfulness, but a practical one. What makes us faint in calamity, quarrel with Providence, murmur under disappointments, betake ourselves to unworthy means to avoid calamity or obtain relief, &c.

III. Satisfaction is sought in vain while we desert God. "Wander from mountain to hill."

1. Some concentrate happiness in *self*.

2. Others seek satisfaction in their *worldly possessions* and *well-planned enterprises*.

3. Others in their personal *talents*.

4. Others in their untarnished *reputation*.

No matter what be the object of idolatry, if God be "forgotten" and the proper "resting-place" forsaken, if the care of their soul be neglected and the cross of Christ unsought, "*destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known.*"

(*a.*) There is *criminality* in this neglect of God.

(*b.*) There is *degradation* in it.

(*c.*) There is *ruin, disaster*, in it, sooner or later.

IV. God's dispensations correct this perverse tendency *in man to roam from Him*.

1. The dispensations of His *providence*.

2. The influence of *His grace and Spirit*.

Comments—

Ver. 6. "My people hath been lost sheep: *their shepherds have caused them to go astray.*" See on chap. ii. 8, and especially xxiii. 1 *seq.*

Ver. 7. "*Their adversaries said, We offend not, because they sinned against the Lord.*" "It is the worst condition into which the Church of God can come when the enemies who desolate it maintain they are in the right in doing so. It is, however, a just Nemesis when those who will not hear the regular messengers of God must be told by the extraordinary messengers of God what they should have done."—*Naegelsbach.*

Nebuzaradan urged the plea of this verse (chap. xl. 2, 3; *cf.* Zech. xi. 5). The Jews' guilt was so palpable that they were condemned even in the judgment of heathens. They saw they had apostatised from "the hope of their fathers," from the God whose faithfulness their fathers had experienced.

Ver. 14. "*Against Babylon, for she hath sinned against the Lord.*" By oppressing His people; for their cause is His. Also by profaning His sacred vessels (Dan. v. 2).

Ver. 17. *Theme:* THE SCATTERED SHEEP. "*Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions hath driven him away.*"

Sin made them victims of invading conquerors. Text was fulfilled in the captivity by Assyria. Language appropriate to every lost sinner.

I. A wandering sheep is a very fit emblem of a poor sinner. Entangled in the briars of the wilderness, torn and pierced by its thorns; the lions have devoured us, &c. In plain language: man's heart, affections, powers of his mind, all are alienated from God. A wandering sheep is the emblem of—

1. *Indigence, perplexity*, and *disappointment*.

2. *Danger*.

3. *Helplessness*.

4. *An object of pity and anxious solicitude*. God pitied the sinner (John iii. 16); His love is illustrated by Luke xv. 3, &c.

II. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd, who seeks and gathers into His fold His wandering sheep. As such He is frequently described (Ps. xxiii. 1; Isa. xl. 11; John x. 11).

1. *He knows they are in the wilderness*. He came "to seek and to save that which is lost." He finds them in a ruined condition.

2. *He pities them, and rescues them from their enemies*. He "takes the prey from the mighty, and delivers the lawful captive."

3. *He restoreth the soul* (Ps. xxiii.) He came to give "life more abundantly"

(John x. 10, 11). For this purpose He died, paid the price, &c.

III. How blessed is the present state of the restored sheep! Loved, redeemed, enfolded.

1. The fold of Christ is a *secure* enclosure. The "Lord is round about His people." His perfections are on every side for their security.

2. They are in *suitable and congenial society.* Sheep associate not with other animals. We "have fellowship *one with another.*"

3. He will *ever watch over them,* guide and defend them; for they are precious to Him. He will "never leave nor forsake them:" be with them in the valley of death, and then enfold them in heaven.

IV. The restored sheep are amply tended and nourished.

1. They "go in and out and *find pasture.*" But they are not always fed on the same ordinance. The blessing is not confined to one means of grace.

2. *All the blessings of the new covenant are for the nourishment of the soul.*

3. *The endearing character of Christ should engage* our confidence, as our Shepherd. He is infinitely good, providentially kind, and graciously tender to His people. His bounty supplies, His wisdom orders, all things for us; and His Gospel brings us every spiritual enjoyment.

V. The sheep shall be eventually removed from the fold below to that in glory.

1. Here they have much enjoyment, but it is often *imperfect* and *interrupted.* Sin disquiets, the world disappoints, ordinances only prove a blessing occasionally.

2. The time is nearing when the flock shall be *all in one fold, eternally with the Shepherd,* led by Him into the ever-verdant pastures.

(*a.*) Are you one of Christ's sheep? As a wandering sinner, have you been reclaimed?

(*b.*) Have you sensible enjoyment of the provisions of the Gospel? Are they to you green pastures, &c.?

(*c.*) If not identified with the flock of Christ now, at the day of division you will be severed from the redeemed of the Lord (Matt. xxv. 31, &c.)

—*From "Helps for the Pulpit."*

Ver. 20. *Theme:* GOD'S MERCY TO HIS PEOPLE. "*In those days the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.*"

God's promises seem so "exceeding great" that we are tempted to limit them by conditions. Men may indeed deceive themselves *as to their own personal interest in them;* but God is sovereign in His affluence.

This promise has been *only in part* accomplished; for since the Jews' return from Babylon "their sins have been found," and visited, too, in wrathful indignation for many hundreds of years. At a period fast nearing, God's elect among them shall be restored to His favour, &c.

I. The extent of God's mercy to His chosen people.

1. They are constantly represented as *a remnant.* Yet they are "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5).

2. *For them, however, God designs the richest mercy.* A full and perfect *remission of all sin* (Isa. xxxviii. 17); and to *remember* their sins no more for ever (Jer. xxxi. 31–34; Heb. x. 14–17). God will henceforth view them *as they are in Christ,* "without spot or blemish" (Eph. v. 27).

II. The interest which the Jewish nation has in this covenanted mercy.

1. *They are the direct objects God has in view* in this promise. We do right to apply these words to God's elect generally, but wrong to overlook their primary purpose. This is emphatically a pledge to *the Jews.*

2. So applied, *the promise should fill us with unutterable joy.*

III. With what thoughts should we contemplate this promised mercy?

1. *Amazement* at the riches of God's grace.

2. *Humiliation,* loathing ourselves for our iniquities against such a God.

3. *Gratitude* (Rom. xii. 1).

4. *Affiance.* In all He has done He gives us the pledge that He will never suffer any one to "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"—*Rev. Chas. Simeon, M.A.*, 1828.

Ver. 20. *Theme:* PLENTEOUS FORGIVENESS. "*I will pardon them whom I reserve.*"

I. In some cases *pardon would be both* unrighteous and dangerous.

The law must be honoured and the transgressor cease from the sin which needs pardon.

II. *The pardon God bestows is* sovereign in its exercise.

As pardon is an act *of grace*, not merited, it must be sovereign; bestowed according to the good pleasure of His will.

III. A universal offer of pardon *is proclaimed in the Gospel.*

On the ground of "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

IV. While, therefore, God's grace designs the scheme of pardon through Christ, the responsibility of securing pardon rests on man.

However wicked, no man need despair of obtaining it. "Let him return unto the Lord, and He will abundantly pardon."

How can we doubt this when He pardoned a Manasseh, a Magdalene, a Saul? "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."—*Rev. D. Pledge.* (*See Addenda:* SIN IN OBLIVION.)

Comments—

Ver. 24. "*I have laid a snare for thee,* O Babylon." Cyrus turned the waters of the Euphrates into a different channel, and so entered Babylon by the dried-up channel at night. Thus was the impregnable city taken by a stratagem—"*Thou wast not aware;*" for one-half of the city was in the enemy's hands before the other knew of it.

Ver. 34. *Theme:* THE STRENGTH OF THE REDEEMER. "Their Redeemer is strong."

I. *These words* suggest a difficulty. If He be strong, why does Israel so often suffer beneath the hand of the oppressor? If my father have bread, why do I hunger?

1. God does *not display His strength at once,* in order *the more to glorify it.* Lazarus dies. Jesus hastens not to him until the third day. Why? We had never known He could raise the dead if He had displayed His power always in healing the sick. Stephen dies full of faith, triumphing. God could have saved him from death, but showed His power by sustaining him.

2. God does not at once display His strength, &c., in order to *make His people lay hold of it.* When did Jonah, Manasseh, &c., cry loudest? Was it not when His arm seemed far from helping them?

3. Another reason is that *He hereby chastens His people.* There is no greater punishment than God leaving us to ourselves.

4. Hereby *He instructs them.* We are taught that God's strength will never be exerted to make us secure in sin and indolence.

5. Often He does not exert His strength to liberate His people so that He may *show mercy to their oppressors.* He delayed to redeem Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh that Moses might reason with him.

II. *These words convey a* blessed truth.

1. Consider *the might of the enemy from whom He delivers us.* From the power of Satan, the world, our evil hearts.

2. Consider *the completeness of the deliverance.* He saves both body and soul, by His own arm, without the help of another. "His own arm hath gotten Him the victory."

3. Consider His strength *upholds to the very end all whom He hath redeemed.* He brings up from Egypt to the goodly land. Was there one of all the host He brought out of Egypt that was forced back to captivity?

III. *These words imply* a terrible warning.

1. To *all who oppress God's people.* He who blesses the giver of the cup of

cold water shall punish all those who touch one of these little ones.

2. To *all who reject* His help. As strong to slay as to make alive. Seek His blessing. Flee to Israel's strong Redeemer, lest the plagues written in the Book be experienced by you.

Say not, "I am willing to enjoy life now and take the consequences of it hereafter." Say not, "If it be right, I am willing to expiate my crimes." That is but hanging garlands on the sword that must enter your soul.—*From "Stems and Twigs."*

Comments—

Vers. 39, 40. BABYLON DESERTED OF INHABITANTS. This utter extinction of Babylon was not effected by one stroke, but gradually. *Cyrus* took away its supremacy. *Darius Hystaspes* deprived it, when it had rebelled against Persia, of its fortifications. *Seleucus Nicanor* removed its citizens and wealth to Seleucia, which he founded close by Babylon. The *Parthians* removed all that was left to Ctesiphon. Nothing but its walls were left under the Roman Emperor *Adrian*.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER L.: ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

Ver. 5. Faces Zionward. Among the old Romans there prevailed the touching custom of holding the face of every new-born infant towards the heavens, signifying, by their presenting its forehead to the stars, that it was to look above the world into celestial glories. It was a vain superstition; but Christianity dispels the fable, and gives us a clear realisation of the Pagan yearning. Young lives should be turned with their faces heavenwards.

Ver. 20. Sin cast into oblivion. Cicero said of Cæsar, "He forgiveth nothing but injuries only."

"These evils I deserve,
Yet despair not of His final pardon,
Whose ear is ever open, and His eye
Gracious to readmit the suppliant."
—*Milton.*

CHAPTER LI.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—For *Chronological Notes*, see foregoing chapter.

Geographical References.—Ver. 27. "*The kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz.*" These nations of Western Asia are summoned to join the Medes in their attack on Babylon. By "*Ararat*" is meant the region of Upper or Major Armenia, in the vicinity of the mountain; by "*Minni*," Lower or Minor Armenia; and by "*Ashchenaz*," probably Asia Minor, in which "Ascania" stands.

Personal Allusions.—Ver. 59. "*Seraiah*," brother to Baruch (chap. xxxii. 12) and the king's chamberlain; see below, *Lit. Crit.* on verse.

Literary Criticisms.—Ver. 1. "*A destroying wind:*" possibly this should read "a destroying *spirit*," *i.e.*, Cyrus.

Ver. 5. "*Israel* hath *not* been *forsaken:*" read, "Israel is not widowed nor Judah of his God."

Ver. 10. "*The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness:*" rather, *righteousnesses*, pl. צְדָקוֹת, *i.e.*, proofs that we are righteous.

Ver. 12. "*Upon the walls*," should be *against* the walls.

Ver. 23. "*I will also break in pieces:*" Henderson notes that מַפֵּץ, from נָפַץ, to *scatter*, break, dash in pieces, designates the *war-club* anciently used by warriors for the purpose of clearing away all with whom they came in contact.

Ver. 41. "*Sheshach:*" *vide* Notes on chap. xxv. 26.

Ver. 50. "*Remember the Lord afar off:*" *i.e.*, from afar; from Chaldea, far distant from Zion, God's dwelling-place.

Ver. 59. "*A quiet prince*," שַׂר־מְנוּחָה, has been variously rendered. The *Sept.*, ἄρχων δώρων, as if Seraiah were the distributor of the royal presents. The *Vulg.*, "prince of prophecy." Other renderings are, "chief of the caravan," "lord chamberlain;" but there is warrant for the rendering as the E.V. Comp. אִישׁ־מְנוּחָה, *a man of quietness*. 1 Chron. xxii. 9

SUBJECT OF CHAPTER LI.: MYSTIC BABYLON; ROMANISM DOOMED.

General Survey: BABYLON'S DOOM; MYSTIC BABYLON'S DESTRUCTION.

i. The Median power, which Babylon formerly invited to unite with her for Nineveh's destruction, was *made the instrument for her own overthrow.* So in the Apocalypse it is revealed that some of the kings who were once vassals of the mystical Babylon will be the instruments in God's hands for chastising her (Rev. xvii. 16).

ii. Babylon's colossal splendour formed no hindrance to God's purposes of her fall, for *He opens unlooked-for avenues along which His judgments may invade the strongholds of evil.* The *Euphrates* of her power, which, with mystic Babylon, has flowed on for so many centuries, and in which she has trusted as her defence, the *non possumus* of the Pontifical arrogance, may prove the cause of her destruction. See Rev. xvi. 12. Nor shall all her vaunted majesty and glory save her in the hour of invasion, when God's emissaries of judgment flow in upon her.

iii. The *suddenness of Babylon's capture* (vers. 8, 41) may have equal analogy. At a time when she is most exultant, revelling in some imposing festival or carnival, as Babylon was feasting at the time of its invasion, elate with pride, fearless of harm, provoking God by her sacrilege of sacred things, then the fingers of a man's hand shall write her downfall, and she shall be ensnared. See Rev. xviii. 10, 17. "*In one hour* is thy judgment come!"

iv. As with Babylon so with Rome, *her fall shall be total and final,* leaving her an absolute and hopeless ruin.

The walls of Babylon, of vast dimensions, 87 feet broad and 360 feet in height, the palaces and vast architectures within (ver. 53), all suggested imperishable strength; as indeed the vast system of Romanism does to-day. But all her excellency became a ruin (ver. 58), and ancient Babylon became a dreary wilderness, unsightly "heaps" (ver. 37). Alexander the Great made efforts to rebuild Babylon, and employed 2000 workmen for two months in clearing away the foundations of the Temple of Belus, preparatory to his project: but he died in the midst of his ambitious scheme, and it was abandoned. Nor shall Rome ever exalt her head more when once the hand of doom lays her pride low. "It shall be found *no more* at all" (Rev. xviii. 21).

v. Babylon's ruin became *the signal for Israel's release and redemption.* The faithful Jews in captivity there found liberty once more, and returned to rebuild Jerusalem and restore the desolations of Zion. Even so shall the fall of Rome set free the souls of men from the galling captivities of superstition, and the true Israel, the Church of Christ, shall rise into honour, prosperity, and power (Rev. xix. 1–9).

vi. Israel was *admonished and enjoined to flee from Babylon* and "deliver every man his soul" (vers. 6 and 45); so from mystic Babylon the voice of inspiration urges men *to separate themselves from her sins and escape her impending destruction.* "I heard a voice from heaven saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. xviii. 4).

General Topic: THE PREDICTED OVERTHROW OF BABYLON.

Probably no people were ever more luxurious and licentious than the Babylonians at the time of their overthrow. Disgusting excesses marked the pleasures of the table, and debauchery crowned the banquet. Profligacy especially characterised the female sex; hence the image in Revelation of mystic Babylon as a vile woman (xvii. 1, 2, 18, xix. 2, &c.), hurled from the seat of her effeminacy into total misery and degradation, is used to represent Babylon's doom.

I. Prophecy literally vindicated. Almost every step in the fall of Babylon, and its subsequent reverses, is the accomplishment of a prophecy.

1. *The name of the victor*, with his appointment by Providence to the work of retribution, was given more than a century before his birth (Isa. xlv. 1–3).

2. The *varied character of the besieging host* which would be engaged in the assault is minutely described. Not only the Medo-Persian army, but auxiliaries drawn from the highlands of Armenia, the provinces of Asia Minor, and the great deserts bordering on the Indian Caucasus (Jer. l. 41, 42, li. 11, 27, 28).

3. Some *leading circumstances of the capture* are also unequivocally pointed out. (1.) The *intemperate festivity* of the population (Jer. li. 57). (2.) The *negligence of the guards* in charge of the portals of the river: "gates not shut" (Isa. xlv. 1). (3.) The remarkable *operation upon the Euphrates* (Isa. xliv. 27; Jer. l. 38, li. 32, 36). (4.) The *suddenness and surprise of the capture* (Jer. l. 24).

Nothing can be more exact that the correspondence between the futures of Babylon and the language of prophecy. Its story, viewed in connection with the previous announcement dictated by the Spirit of inspiration, is—

i. A bright evidence of the truth of the Holy Scripture and of the divinity which breathes in its pages.

ii. A confirmation of the religious system revealed in God's Word, from the first promise made to the first transgressor, to its perfect realisation in the Gospel of Christ.

II. Sacred lessons emphatically enforced. The records of Babylon's overthrow should be read—

1. *By the believer.*

(1.) *With trembling awe*, as an illustration of the *divine anger against the sinfulness of man.*

(2.) *With grateful feelings* also, as strengthening the conviction that the foundations of his faith and hope are solid.

(3.) With *assurance of the verity of God's promises*, that, as He fulfilled the words of awful retribution, so will He His promises of gracious deliverance: for "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

2. *By the enemies of God's people*—with the appalling thought that as Babylon, the great oppressor of God's ancient people, has been reduced to nothingness, so certainly will all the persecuting enemies of the Church of Christ, of which that people is the selected type, be brought to confusion.

3. *By the sceptic and infidel.* The whole case is abundantly admonitory to such. Well would it be for them to *compare the convincing evidences* of the religious system they reject with the difficulties and hollowness of their own theories; to remember that *if Christianity be true, its truth is awful* to those who repudiate it; and to *turn from their own delusive dogmas* to receive the revelation of the Bible, while yet an insulted but still merciful God is waiting to be gracious to the chief of sinners through the mediation of the Son of His love.—*Babylon and Nineveh.*

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON CHAPTER LI.

Ver. 5. *Theme:* ISRAEL NOT ABANDONED.

See Lit. Crit. on verse: "Not widowed," not deserted by the Lord, who is her Husband.

Comp. chap. iii. v. 14; Homilies on p. 60, "*Banished yet still beloved;*" and 66, "*God a loving Husband,*" *et seq.*

Ver. 6. *Theme:* ROMANISM RENOUNCED.

"*Flee out of the midst of Babylon*, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity."

I. A doomed system entails the doom of its votaries. As they who will not leave a sinking vessel, sink with her.

II. Identification with a false religion is culpable in God's regard. "Her *iniquity*" becomes the iniquity of each individual adherent, and each will be

"cut off" as being responsible for and sharing her sins. Men cannot screen themselves on the plea that they have always been what they are, and therefore they should stay where they are. "*Flee out*," &c.

III. The soul's safety is jeopardised by delusive systems. "Deliver every man *his soul*."

False beliefs are as fatal as no beliefs. "*Refuges of lies*" will be destroyed, and *houses built on sand* will fall.

IV. Prompt and earnest separation from Babylon's errors is enjoined. "*Flee out* of the *midst* of Babylon."

1. We have responsibilities towards truth, and should *flee from error*.

2. We have duties to our souls, and should *separate ourselves from known spiritual delusions and dangers*.

3. We have clear forewarnings of judgment, and should *haste to escape* from the coming tribulation.

Note—

"A time may come when it is well to separate one's self. There may come moments in the life of a Church when it will be a duty to leave the community. Such a moment is come when the community has become a Babylon. When the soul can no longer find in the Church the pure and divine bread of life, it is well "to deliver the soul that it perish not in the iniquity of the Church."—*Article on Sects in Herzog, R.-Enc.*

Ver. 7. *Theme:* ROME'S LUXURIANCE.

'Babylon hath been *a golden cup* in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken."

For the *metaphor* see *Topic*, chap. xxv. 15 *seq.*; "*The wine-cup of wrath*" (p. 474).

Compare for *identification of Babylon with Rome*, Rev. xiv. 8; xvii. 4.

I. "A *golden cup*" dazzles and fascinates the beholder. Men's eyes are bewitched and dazed by the *glitter* and splendour of *gold*, by the gilded errors of Rome, so that they do not inquire what the "cup" contains. (So suggests *Origen*.)

II. *From* "*a golden cup*" *men may* drink maddening intoxicants. "The nations have drunken of her wine: therefore the nations *are mad*." This suggests that the errors and blandishments of Rome, her opulence and splendour, stupefy men's reason and conscience, as "wine" does the inebriate.

III. In Rome's *golden chalice* are delusive and destructive drinks. "Mark well," says *Origen*, "in the golden cup of Babylon is the poison of idolatry, the poison of false doctrines, which destroy the souls of men. I have often seen such a 'golden cup' in the fair speeches of seductive eloquence, and when I have examined the various ingredients of the golden chalice, I have recognised the cup of Babylon."

IV. *From this* "*golden cup*" *the* Lord administers judgment *to Rome's intoxicated dupes*. "A golden cup in *the hand of the Lord*." Jehovah *used* ancient Babylon to punish the godless nations and apostate Israel. He now *uses Rome* as an agency of *judgment on faithless souls*. They who will not use their endowments and opportunities aright, who prostitute their reason, conscience, and will before the fascination of these "golden" errors of Rome, who neglect the sacred chalice of the Holy Bible and prefer to drink from Rome's cup of errors, God uses Romanism to *punish such*: "Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, that they may believe a lie" (2 Thess. ii. 11).

Ver. 9. *Theme:* ROME'S REJECTION OF HEALING.

I. Health-giving teaching, if received, *might have* healed the errors of Rome. This was offered Babylon; her remedy lay in receiving God's Word, urged upon her by God's prophets. So with mystical Babylon: she has been offered instruction and warning by Paul (2 Thess. ii. 2–9), by the Apocalypse (Rev. xiii.–xviii.) *Protestantism* has been attempting to heal Rome by the literature diffused and arguments addressed against Rome's errors, and by appeals to Scripture truth.

II. Besotted attachment to wrong *leads to the refusal of God's truth. Saving doctrines* are rejected when they would *save from cherished* errors and *beloved*

sins and *profitable* lies. So still: light shines in Christian teaching sufficient to scatter the darkness. "But men *love* darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Rome refuses healing, rejects truth, because errors are her traffic.

III. From the outraged heavens doom hangs over deceitful and destructive Rome. "Her *sins* have *reached unto heaven*" (Rev. xviii. 5). Therefore "*her judgment* reacheth unto heaven," as if pressing upon God the urgency of executing her overthrow. And certainly God hath sent the forewarnings of Rome's doom from the heavens in His Word, and ere long the thunders of His destructive wrath will sweep down upon the Antichrist.

Ver. 10. *Theme:* ISRAEL JUSTIFIED AGAINST BABYLON. "The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness."

I. Punishment of sinners testifies of *the advantages of righteousness.*

II. Overthrow of error testifies to *the veracity of divine truth*, on which righteous souls lived by faith.

III. Defeat of God's foes testifies to *the blessedness of His people*, whom He befriends.

IV. Deliverance of the righteous testifies that, though their adversaries may for a while prevail, *the injustice of evil-doers and the goodness of God's children* will ultimately be vindicated.

Therefore—

1. *Wait patiently under endurance* of wrong. God will work your justification against evil-doers (Ps. xxxvii. 7).

2. *Believe in God's watchfulness of you in the day of your oppression.* He marks your conduct during your "captivity," remembers to your account your "righteousness," and will "*bring it forth*" in due season. "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning" (Isa. lviii. 8).

Ver. 13. *Theme:* ROME'S RESOURCES DESOLATED. "O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness."

"Many waters." Not only was Babylon protected and nourished by the mighty river Euphrates, but by numerous canals and streams. These were essential to her very existence—for drink, food, health, transit, and safety. Thus with Romanism, "that sitteth upon *many waters*" (Rev. xvii. 1); and "the waters are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (ver. 15). These form the tributary streams to nourish Rome by gifts, money, popular sympathy.

"Abundant treasures." The immense booty of Nineveh, the plunder of Jerusalem, the tributes which Syrian and Phœnician cities furnished, the fruitfulness of the Babylonian territory itself. Comp. Rev. xviii. 12, 19.

"Her end come." The words are, "Thy end is come," *i.e.*, the *retribution* for (or *limitation* of the period of) thy covetousness. Babylon's day for spoiling others and enriching herself closed. So shall Rome's (Rev. xviii.)

Vers. 15–19. *Theme:* AN APPEAL TO GOD'S WORKS.

See Homily on p. 219, chap. x. 12–16, *verbatim.*

Ver. 25. *Theme:* VOLCANIC ROME. "*O destroying mountain.*"

The imagery here is of a volcano, whose burning lava "rolls down," itself "*a burnt mountain;*" lit., a mount of *burning.*

Such was Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar; its *destructive energy* was like the fierce outbreak of volcanic fires, and its *rapid collapse* was as a volcano whose fires had burned themselves extinct.

Rome, which has *raised itself up to heaven in lofty assumption*, which has *surrounded itself with bewitching charms*, like the luxuriancies of nature that abound in warm and fertile volcanic regions, which has *proudly domineered* like a lofty mountain over surrounding lands, will also, like a volcano, bring ruin on itself and on all it overshadows by the fires which are ready to burst forth in God's time.

I. A volcano impresses beholders with its majestic beauty. So does Rome.

II. A volcanic mountain wears the appearance of enduring strength. So does Rome.

III. Near a volcano residents dwell oblivious of perils. So with the adherents of Rome.

IV. The absence of fiery portents in a volcano is a sign to the wise of gathering fury. So when Rome shows no threatening signs she is most seductive.

V. Within a volcano slumber ruinous fires. And Rome will be both destroyed herself and all who trust in her.

Note: The mystical Babylon will be overthrown *with fire:* Rev. xvii. 16, xviii. 8, 9, 18—"the smoke of her burning."

Vers. 30–33. BABYLON'S CAPTURE BY CYRUS.

For historic records comp. on chap. xxv. pp. 473, 474.

Note: Prophets *beforehand* and historians *afterwards* coincide in describing the events.

Ver. 33. *Theme:* A COMING HARVEST. "*Yet a little while and the time of the harvest shall come.*"

The noble practice of Jewish antiquity was that the harvest should never be gathered in till the first ripe sheaf was brought into the Temple of the Lord, and presented as an acknowledgment to the Lord of the harvest (Lev. ix. 14). This was to connect the Giver with His gifts, to associate our temporal mercies with the sanctuary of religion, and to hold communion with God in the enjoyment of His favours.

Ought we not to be thankful to the God of our mercies when we see a smiling spring followed by a joyful harvest, &c.? Always the practice of saints (Ps. lxv.)

The very constancy of Nature banishes our Creator from our thoughts. We need to be told there is going on everywhere around us a vast system utterly independent of human wisdom; need to be reminded of invisible dominion and concealed omnipotence.

Text points us to another harvest: and the plain doctrine is *every man has a harvest of his own* daily ripening, and may be unexpectedly gathered in:—A harvest of punishment for the ungodly (from this our only refuge is the Cross of Christ); of mercy to the penitent (through Christ); of consolation to the sorrowful; of final blessedness to the righteous.

I. There is a harvest of punishment for the ungodly. Prophecy against Babylon, type of all sinners.

Life is the seedtime of an immortal harvest. It is the scene of a mighty preparation; it is the first step of an infinite series; it is the dawn of an everlasting day. We are beginning to be what we shall for ever be. In your nature are united *mortality* and *immortality.*

God has made a seedtime of iniquity the certain forerunner of a harvest of shame and punishment—partly present, partly future. He has laid it down as an unalterable maxim of His government that *what a man soweth he shall reap.* The law that regulates the return of day and night and the renewal of seedtime and harvest is not more sure than that sin brings sorrow here or hereafter. These are things of every day's experience. A wild and wasteful youth makes an unhappy and unrespected manhood. He who neglects the cultivation of his mind and the formation of his character when young can never repair the damage afterwards; just as if the husbandmen let his seedtime pass without sowing, the whole year is lost to him beyond recovery. The same law prevails in much higher matters. The man that lives without Christ usually dies without Him; and he who dies without Christ perishes to all eternity without Him. *Every day the sinner carries a brand to his own burning.*

Inquire what seed you are sowing? What a harvest you expect to reap? "*The wages of sin is death.*" "*The way of transgressors is hard.*" And if it be solemn now for sinners to eat the fruit of their own ways, to be caught in their own snare, and even on earth to be pierced through with many sorrows—what will it be in eternity, when "righteousness shall be laid to the line and judgment to the plummet," when they

all be resigned to the evil they have osen, and when God shall verify to the icked the anticipations of their own morse, and give them bread (the bread sorrow) to eat unto the full? We ejoice in the return of harvest; but know you not that there is a harvest of which God is the proprietor, angels are the reapers, and the souls of men are to be gathered in? Know you not that the world is ripening for the harvest, and you are ripening with it? Know you not that that Saviour who was once crucified on Calvary, and has been often crucified by you, is about to ascend the throne of judgment, and to "*send forth His angels and gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and cast them into the lake of fire!*" Soon shall the signal be given, "*Thrust in thy sickle.*"

"*Yet a little while.*" All your hope hangs upon those two short words—a little while. What a revolution may be accomplished! You may flee for refuge; may exercise repentance and faith; may obtain salvation with eternal glory; may share the sanctifying influence of the Spirit; may have the tide of damnation rolled back; may have incorruptible seed sown in your souls.

It is *but* "*a little while.*" Oh, delay not. Escape for life. Listen not to tempter. Better Councillor asks your heed.

II. A harvest of mercy to the penitent. "They that sow in tears," &c. All the provisions of the Gospel covenant go to assure peace and pardon to those who, renouncing self-dependence and relying on the mercy of God in Christ, place all their hope where God placed all their help.

But we are no strangers to the anxiety of the penitent on this head. Our fears are usually in proportion to our hopes. You may be assaulted with many temptations, the subject of many apprehensions, doubtful whether your sins are not too many and aggravated, alarmed lest you should not have come aright. "*We are not ignorant of Satan's devices,*" nor of the misgivings of the burdened mind. But "*strong consolation*" is promised to them that flee for refuge. Prayers and tears and desires for pardon and purity offered by faith in Christ will produce a harvest nothing else will. The promise is sure: "*Him that cometh.*" "*Ask and you shall.*"

III. A harvest of consolation to the sorrowful. "*Comfort ye.*" "*He that goeth forth,*" &c. Many afflictions are the Christian's portion. But God "gives songs in the night." And the time is limited—the night is followed by morning. "*Our light afflictions but for a moment—far more.*" God tempers and mitigates trial. God fortifies the mind under it, strengthening to bear that the prospect of which would have overwhelmed. Internal peace in outward trial. Harvest now—hereafter. No one of that palm-bearing company regrets past trials (Rev. vii. 9–14).

IV. A harvest of final blessedness to the righteous. "Be faithful unto death," &c.—*S. Thodey*, 1825.

Ver. 41. "SHESHACH." Comp. p. 475.

Ver. 45. QUITTING BABYLON. See on ver. 6.

Ver. 46. *Theme:* FOREWARNINGS OF EVIL.

"*Ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard.*"

The fall of Babylon was to be preceded by a state of disquiet, men's minds being unsettled partly by rumours of the warlike preparations of the Medes and of actual invasions, in repelling one of which Neriglissar fell; partly by intestine feuds, in which Evil-Merodach and Latorosoarchod was murdered. So before the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans the Church had similar warnings (Matt. xxiv. 6, 7).

I. Opportunity *precedes impending judgment.*

II. God thus ameliorates the severity *of grave crises.*

III. Responsibility is thereby thrown upon us to *heed His warnings* and *utilise the interval of grace.*

IV. Neglect of such interludes, during which God stays the judgment, much *increases the anguish when the storm at length bursts.*

V. Spiritual wisdom in discerning

the propitious hour is *given* to and *distinguishes* those who are appointed to salvation.

VI. Senselessness of danger amid these forewarnings shows men to be ripe for destruction.

These Babylonians laughed danger to scorn on the very night when doom fell upon them. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Ver. 48. *Theme:* JOY IN HEAVEN OVER BABYLON'S FALL.

I. Songs of judgment *upon the enemies of Israel.* See Exod. xv. 5 *seq.*; Ps. cxviii. 12, 15, 16; Rev. xviii. 20.

II. Songs of deliverance for *God's people redeemed.* Comp. vers. 49, 50.

This is in effect the joy described in Luke xv. 6, 7.

III. Songs of celebration of *God's promises fulfilled.*

For the heavenly hosts surely watch the accomplishment of Jehovah's pledges to His afflicted people, and hail the day of their completion (Isa. xliii. 23).

Ver. 50. *Theme:* REVIVED MEMORIES OF SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES. "*Remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.*"

This is an appeal to the Jews to turn all their longings Zionward so soon as Cyrus opens Babylon for them to escape.

I. Sorrowing exiles of Zion cherish tender memories of long-lost privileges.

II. Freedom regained should be promptly used for our glad return to God.

III. Sacred heritages in God and Zion await the ransomed of the Lord on their return.

Or, Valedictory address to missionaries or emigrants.

Lange's Commentary says—

"This text may be used at the *sending out of missionaries* or the *departure of emigrants.* Occasion may be taken to speak—

"1. Of THE GRACIOUS HELP AND DELIVERANCE which the Lord hath hitherto shown to the departing. 'Ye that have *escaped of the* sword.'

"2. They may be ADMONISHED TO FIDELITY in that distant land.

"(1.) In '*remembering the Lord,*' *i.e.*, ever remaining sincerely devoted to Him, and trusting Him as the shield of our salvation.

"(2.) In *faithfully serving Jerusalem, i.e.*, the Church and cause of Christ, with all their powers, keeping the progress of the kingdom of our Lord ever near their hearts."

Ver. 56. *Theme:* RECOMPENSES. "*The Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite.*"

I. All history illustrates and establishes this fact.

Not an *evil* has been committed, not a *good* has been done, but has been followed with recompense. The sin of Adam, of Cain, of Sodom, of the Antediluvians, all were recompensed.

Nor does *good* fail of reward. "He is not unmindful to forget your labour of love." Even the gift of a cup of cold water is to be rewarded. Comp. Matt. xxv. 35 *seq.*

II. *The requiting of men's deeds often finds illustration in the* laws of our physical and mental being.

God has so constituted us that *evil is productive of evil* and *good of good.* By the very laws of our nature the drunkard is recompensed by loss of reason, the libertine by loss of health, &c.; so by the same laws of our being the kind, the compassionate, &c., are requited with joy, peace, &c.; a "great recompense of reward."

These are the *natural* recompenses which flow from the operation of Nature's laws apart from God's judgments.

III. There still remains to be superadded the judicial recompense, which the Righteous Judge will administer.

"He will render to every man according to his deeds:" *deeds of wickedness* by the frown of His anger and the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed;" *deeds of righteousness* by the smile of His favour and the welcome, "Come, ye blessed."

IV. Yet notwithstanding this natural and judicial recompense, men are not deterred from evil nor constrained to do good.

How astounding the depravity of the human heart! "Desperately wicked" indeed, when the fearful consequences of evil and the blessed results of good, here and hereafter, fail to influence the heart.

V. *From the* ultimate consequences of our deeds there can *be no possible escape.* "The Lord God of recompenses shall *surely* requite." "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." "With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful, with the upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright; with the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure, and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward."

Compare "Walks with Jeremiah."—*Pledge.*

Ver. 58. "THE BROAD WALLS OF BABYLON."

These walls were 85 English feet in *width* (according to Herodotus), 32 feet (according to Strabo and Q. Curtius). Their *height* was 335 feet (Herodotus), 235 (Pliny), 150 (Curtius), 75 (Strabo). But as there was an outer and inner enclosure, they may not all have been referring to the same walls, or the outer wall may have differed in height in different parts. The entire *length* of the walls was (according to lowest estimate) 41 miles, and by other authorities is estimated at 48, and by Herodotus at 60 miles in extent.

Berosus says that triple walls encompassed the outer, and the same number the inner city; and that Cyrus ordered the outer walls to be demolished. A cylindrical inscription records that Esar-haddon was the real builder of the walls of Babylon, and that Nebuchadnezzar only completed them.

"HER HIGH GATES." One hundred in number, twenty-five on each of the four sides of the square-built city. An ancient inscription exists which says, "In the thresholds of the great gates I inserted folding-doors of brass, with very strong railings and gratings (?)."

Ver. 59. SERAIAH CARRYING THE PREDICTION OF DELIVERANCE TO THE EXILES IN BABYLON.

Zedekiah the king may have journeyed voluntarily to Babylon in order *to obtain some favour* from Nebuchadnezzar, or because he was summoned to be present, as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal, on *some state occasion;* or Nebuchadnezzar might have *distrusted Zedekiah's fidelity,* and have demanded an explanation of the presence of those ambassadors who met that year at Jerusalem from Moab, &c. (chap. xxvii. 3).

Jeremiah used the opportunity for intrusting Seraiah, the king's chief attendant, with these predictions for the exiles at Babylon. (He had already sent them a letter full of affection and hope, chap. xxix.)

As Zedekiah's retinue paused each night on the journey across the desert, it is quite conjectural that Seraiah, his chief courier, may have read to the king the contents of this prophetic roll. "What an interesting subject for conjecture (says Wordsworth) does this view open upon us! How many thoughts may have passed through the mind of the king and of Seraiah his chamberlain at the time! How many conversations may they have had—or certainly might they have had—concerning the destiny of Jerusalem and of Babylon, and concerning things in the far-off future—the liberation and return of the captives of Israel from Babylon by the same road on which they were travelling; and even with regard to blessings more remote, which Jeremiah had pre-announced — the graces and glories of the Gospel of Christ!"

Ver. 63. THE PROPHETIC ROLL SUNK IN THE EUPHRATES.

Not in order to destroy it, but as *symbolic* of events to come. It signified that *Babylon should be likewise overwhelmed* and *sink from sight.* It foreshadowed the like fate of mystic Babylon—Antichristian Rome (see Rev. xviii. 21, "A mighty angel took up a stone," &c.) The *reiteration* of the weird and pensive words—

"THEY SHALL BE WEARY," is also suggestive. They were the final words Jeremiah's prophecy contained (ver

58), and their reiteration as the roll sank would pronounce (what the words imply) the *decayed energy and life of the Chaldeans*, a worn-out power — a fit requiem to accompany the symbolic burial of Babylon.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER LI.: HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN BABYLON'S FALL.

"In his father's absence Belshazzar took the direction of affairs within the city, and met and *foiled for a considerable time all the assaults of the Persians.* He was young and inexperienced, but he had the counsels of the queen-mother to guide and support him, as well as those of the various lords and officers of the court. So well did he manage the defence, that after awhile Cyrus despaired; and, as a last resource, ventured on a stratagem in which it was clear that either he must succeed or perish.

"Withdrawing the greater part of the army from the vicinity of the city, and leaving behind him only certain *corps* of observation, Cyrus marched away up the course of the Euphrates for a certain distance, and there proceeded to make a vigorous use of the spade. His soldiers dug a channel or channels from the Euphrates, by means of which a great portion of its waters could be drawn off, and hoped in this way to render the natural course of the river to be fordable.

"When all was prepared, *Cyrus determined to wait for the arrival of a certain festival*, during which the whole population were wont to engage in drinking and revelling, and then silently, in the dead of the night, to turn the water of the river and make his attack. All fell out as he hoped and wished. The festival was even held with greater pomp and splendour than usual, for Belshazzar, with the natural insolence of youth, to mark his contempt of the besieging army, abandoned himself wholly to the delights of the season, and himself entertained a thousand lords in his palace. Elsewhere the rest of the population was occupied in feasting and dancing. Drunken riot and mad excitement held possession of the town, the siege was forgotten; ordinary precautions were neglected. The *non-closing of the river gates* must have been a neglect of this kind. Had the sentries even kept proper watch, the enemy's approach must have been perceived.

"Following the example of their king, the Babylonians gave themselves up for the night to orgies, in which religious frenzy and drunken excess formed a strange and revolting medley.

"Meanwhile, *outside the city, in silence and darkness, the Persians watched* at two points where the Euphrates entered and left the walls. Anxiously they noted the gradual sinking of the water in the river-bed; still more anxiously they watched to see if those within the walls would observe the suspicious circumstance and sound an alarm through the town. Should such an alarm be given, all their labours would be lost. If, when they entered the river-bed, they found the river walls manned, and the river gates fast locked, they would be indeed 'caught in a trap' (Herod. i. 191). Enfiladed on both sides by an enemy they could neither see nor reach, they would be overwhelmed and destroyed by his missiles before they could succeed in making their escape. But as they watched, no sounds of alarm reached them, only a confused noise of revel and riot, which showed that the unhappy townsmen were quite unconscious of the approach of danger.

"At last shadowy forms began to emerge from the obscurity of the river-bed, and on the landing-places opposite the river gates scattered clusters of men grew into solid columns; *the undefended gateways were seized, a war-shout was raised*, the alarm was taken and spread, and swift runners started off to 'show the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end' (Jer. li. 31). In the darkness and confusion of the night *a terrible massacre ensued* (Xenophon, Cyrop. vii. 5). The drunken revellers

could make no resistance. The king, *paralysed with fear at the awful handwriting upon the wall*, which, too late, had warned him of his peril, could do nothing even to check the progress of the assailants, who carried all before them everywhere. Bursting into the palace, a band of Persians made their way to the presence of the monarch and slew him on the scene of his impious revelry. Other bands carried fire and sword through the town (Xenophon, Cyrop. vii. 5). When morning came, Cyrus found himself undisputed master of the city, which, if it had not despised his efforts, might with the greatest ease have baffled them."—*Robinson's Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iii. p. 515.

"The Persians came upon them unawares, *and on account of the extent of the city*, as is said by those who dwelt there, when the extremities of it were taken, the Babylonians who dwelt in the middle of it were *not aware that they were captured*, but were dancing at the time (for it happened to be a festival), and were rejoicing, until they perceived it in very deed."—*Herodotus*, i. 191.

"Babylon was more like a nation than a city, and it is said that when it was taken, some of its inhabitants did *not hear of the capture till the third day.*"—*Aristotle, Polit.*, iii. c. 1.

CHAPTER LII.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—This chapter forms a historical appendix to the Book of Jeremiah. Its AUTHORSHIP is conjectural. They who think Jeremiah penned it urge that the closing words of chap. li., "Thus far the words of Jeremiah," really ended the original form of the book. Yet this chapter may have been a separate roll, penned earlier than chap. li., and now added to the book as supplying additional details to those he gave in chap. xxxix.; or, indeed, he may have written it, copying part of the Book of Kings (2 Kings xxiv. 18, xxv. 21) as a historical preface to his Book of Lamentations. Others urge that the men of the Great Synagogue took the chapter from Kings and added it here. Others suggest Ezra. Probably some unknown hand appended the account from Kings, adding to that account other items which valuable documents in his possession supplied.

For Chronology of the Chapter and *General Notes, vide* chaps. xxxiv., xxxix. *in loc.*

The DATES given in vers. 28–30 differ from those in other Scripture accounts. The *first deportation* of Jews under Nebuchadnezzar is ascribed to "*the seventh year*" of Nebuchadnezzar's reign; but the numeral here must be the *seventeenth*, the "ten" having dropped out of the text; for the earliest deportation was in the *eighth* year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings xxiv. 12), and the captives were far more numerous than those here reckoned. Most probably the deportations mentioned here are all connected with the final war with Zedekiah; and even then the dates are *one year too early throughout*. See in verses below.

SUBJECT OF THE CHAPTER: CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM.

See for homiletic arrangements of events, "*The Siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar*," pp. 599, 560, and chap. xxxix.

HOMILIES AND COMMENTS ON CHAPTER LII.

Vers. 1–11. *Theme:* THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH.

I. The immediate causes of the captivity (vers. 1–4).

1. *Moral.* "He did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord."

(1.) This is the divine summing up of Lam. i. 6.

(2.) The history of every nation and of every individual proves that sin against God as surely brings ruin as that any physical cause produces its legitimate effect.

(3.) This law in God's moral universe is an all-sufficient answer to the materialist of any and every age. (*a.*) A universe without a moral cause could have no moral law. (*b.*) A class of beings without a *moral* nature could not be legitimate subjects of such a law. (*c.*) But the law exists, and mankind are subjects of it; therefore, &c. &c.

2. *The political cause* (ver. 3). "Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon."

(1.) The invasion of Nebuchadnezzar was politically just. (*a.*) Zedekiah accepted the throne of Judah from the hands of Nebuchadnezzar as his vassal. (*b.*) Every principle of good faith bound Zedekiah to be true to his Babylonian master. (*c.*) To this course he was advised by Jeremiah the prophet, nay, commanded by God (Jer. xxvii. 12–14). (*d.*) Zedekiah's rebellion was no less perfidious, in view of his relation to Nebuchadnezzar, than was his disobedience to God.

II. The terrible sufferings which immediately preceded the captivity (vers. 5–11).

1. *The city was besieged for the space of two years and a half.*

(1.) This was a time of terrible suffering (Lam. iv. 4–10). (*a.*) The children perished with hunger and thirst. (*b.*) The dunghills were searched for scraps of offal. (*c.*) Mothers cooked and ate their own children. (*d.*) The complexion of men grew black with famine. (*e.*) What a type of the sufferings of all who reject God!

2. *At the end of the siege, when the city was taken, the sufferings were still more terrible.*

(1.) Zedekiah, who with his wives and sons, and men of war, fled from the captured city, was overtaken in the plain of Jericho, brought before Nebuchadnezzar, who ordered the sons of Zedekiah to be slain before their father's eyes, and then Zedekiah's own eyes to be "dug out;" and in this pitiable condition he was taken to Babylon, cast into prison, where in blindness and wretchedness he languished till the day of his death.

(2.) Thousands of the unfortunate people were carried away captive to Babylon, whose sufferings have never been written.

(3.) But over all this must be written for the confusion or conviction of men: "Righteous art Thou, O Jehovah, and upright are Thy judgments!" (Ps. cxix. 137).

Practical Lessons—

1. Nowhere are found more striking illustrations of *the hardness and blindness which impenitence produces* than do the kings of Judah and Israel furnish.

2. Nowhere are found more striking illustrations of *the mercy and forbearance of Almighty God.*

3. Nowhere are found more striking illustrations of *the divine truth*, "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).—*Rev. D. C. Hughes.*

Ver. 3. *Theme:* REBELLION AND VENGEANCE. "*Through the anger of the Lord it came to pass . . . that Zedekiah rebelled.*"

i. ANGER IN GOD'S HEART against His *covenant*, yet now *apostate*, people.

ii. GOD'S ANGER IN ACTION: "Till He had cast them out of His presence." Comp. 2 Kings xxiii. 26, 27.

iii. HUMAN AGENCIES OF PUNISHMENT. "It came to pass that *Zedekiah rebelled*," *i.e.*, against Nebuchadnezzar; and that was the moving cause of Jerusalem's destruction. *God exercised no restraint upon Zedekiah* to prevent his rebelling and thus involving Judah's overthrow.

iv. VENGEANCE THE REQUITAL OF A VIOLATED OATH. He "rebelled," notwithstanding his sacred oath of fealty to Nebuchadnezzar, and notwithstanding all God's commands. Comp. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13.

Thus we see why God sometimes places ungodly rulers over a country—to *punish it for its sins* with degradation and destruction.

Ver. 6. *Theme:* FAMINE. "*The famine was sore in the city*," &c.

I. Bread is the gift of God.

1. *In the first instance it was the product of His creative power*, not as now, the result of growth. This is obvious. The *first* grain of wheat could not have proceeded from another grain: it was a direct creation.

2. Its very *growth is the result of His laws.* Let them be suspended: no rain, &c., and the sower might sow in vain.

II. *Bread, God's gift,* withheld as a punishment of sins.

For judicial reasons, God sometimes breaks the whole staff of bread and sends famine into a city or throughout a land. This either *by successive failures in the crops* or *by permitting an invading army* to invest and besiege a city.

The famine in Egypt in Joseph's time was occasioned by a seven years' *failure in the crops;* so the famine in Canaan in Ahab's reign resulted from a three years and six months' drought.

The famine in Jerusalem was caused by a *state of siege* (vers. 4, 5). So was the scarcity in Paris during the reign of Napoleon III., when William, king of Prussia, besieged the city five months.

Thus He who gives bread can take it away; and He does take it away when a land like Egypt becomes tyrannical and oppressive, and a city like Jerusalem or Paris forgets God, lives in defiance of His authority, and tramples under foot divine and human laws.

III. God visits guilty cities *with sore distress.*

When cities fall into moral guilt and depravity, *their prosperity is desolated, their doom is sealed.* With expressions of His anger He visited Jerusalem, with famine first, and then with ruin (ver. 7). Equally with proofs of displeasure He visited France: famine in the city, Paris desolated, the Emperor overturned, the valiants of the army slain. Thus events in A.D. 1870–71 reaffirm the meaning of events in Jerusalem's overthrow nearly six hundred years before Christ.

Superficial observers may see in these events *only the hand of man;* but what saith God? See Isa. lx. 12, Jer. v. 9, whether with war, or pestilence, or famine, God deals with nations and men after their sins.

IV. *Famished cities* on earth suggest thoughts, as a glad contrast, of *the blessed city* of God above, the heavenly Jerusalem. Of its inhabitants it is declared, "They shall *hunger no* more," &c. Many of its residents *did hunger when here on earth, e.g.,* Paul (2 Cor. xi. 27).

No more assaults of foes, nor penalties of sin, nor sufferings and deprivation, will be known in the Holy City, the Jerusalem above.—*Arranged from "Walks with Jeremiah."*

Comments—

Vers. 9–11. *Nebuchadnezzar* "GAVE JUDGMENT" *upon Zedekiah.* See on chap. xxxix. 14; also xxxii. 4, xxxiv. 3.

Ver. 12. "*In the tenth day of the month.*" Note in 2 Kings xxv. 8 it is given as the *seventh* day. But the different preposition explains the difference of dates. "He came *unto* Jerusalem" on the seventh, and "*into* Jerusalem" on the tenth day; or he *moved towards* Jerusalem on the "seventh," and *entered* on the "tenth" day.

Vers. 17–23. Spoils of the Temple carried away, thus fulfilling the prediction of chap. xxvii. 19–22.

The *minute enumeration* of these articles and of their construction shows how precious was the remembrance of them to the godly Israelite. This heightened the bitterness of their loss.

Ver. 24. CAPTURE OF THE PRIESTS.

"As *teachers* are often to blame for their behaviour that sin gets the upper hand in a community, it is exceedingly just when God brings such for an example into great punitive judgment (1 Sam. ii. 27–34)."—*Starke.*

"The *priests* are caught and slain—

"1. *Because they could not believe the truth for themselves.*

"2. *Because they led others astray.*

"3. *Because they appealed to the Temple of the Lord.*

"4. *Because they persecuted the true prophets.*

"5. *Because they troubled the whole Church of God.*

"But he who troubleth shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be (Gal. v. 10)."—*Cramer,* quoted in *Lange.*

Vers. 27–30. DEPORTATION OF CAPTIVES.

"The present account of the deportation of captives by *Nebuchadnezzar himself* (not by Nebuzar-adan) is subordinate and supplemental to other narratives of those taken from Jerusalem at other times. Two of the deportations here mentioned are of the *Jews;* only one was from *Jerusalem* itself. That this is their true character is evident from the smallness of the number here

specified. The total of these three deportations is only 4600, whereas in 2 Kings xxiv. 14–16 they who are carried captive with Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar, in the eighth year of his reign, were 18,000 souls. How many were carried away with Zedekiah by Nebuzar-adan when Jerusalem was burnt we are not told, but probably a still larger number."—*Wordsworth.*

"According to this account, Nebuchadnezzar, in his seventeenth (usually called his eighteenth) year, while the siege of Jerusalem was going on, selected 3023 Jews for deportation to Babylon. In the next year, his eighteenth (*i.e.*, nineteenth), upon the capture of Jerusalem, he selected 832 more, the smallness of the number evincing the desperate tenacity with which the Jews had defended themselves during the year and a half of the siege, and the havoc made in them by famine, pestilence, and the sword. We must bear in mind, however, that Nebuchadnezzar had not left more than 6000 or 7000 people in Jerusalem under Zedekiah, and must not exaggerate this fewness. Finally, five years afterwards, Nebuchadnezzar selected 745 more, not "*from Jerusalem*" (as is said expressly of the 832), but Jews simply, the occasion probably being war with the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites.

"Another point often noticed is the *small number generally of the exiles* carried away compared with the 42,360 men who returned with Ezra (Ezra ii. 64, 65), leaving a large Jewish population behind at Babylon. But if these were *mere supplementary deportations*, they show that a continual drain of people from Judea was going on, and thus help to solve the difficulty."—*Dr. Payne Smith.*

Vers. 31–34. *Theme.* MERCY TO A CAPTIVE KING.

These verses recount the deliverance of Jehoiachin.

I. It shows us that the Lord can help us—

1. Out of great distress: grievous imprisonment of thirty-seven years.

2. In a glorious manner.

II. It admonishes us—

1. To steadfast patience.

2. To believing hope (Psalm xiii.)—*Naegelsbach.*

Vers. 31–34. *Theme:* RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVE. "*The king of Babylon lifted up the head of Jehoiachin, brought him forth, spake kindly, set his throne,*" &c.

The obscure portions of the Word of God are worthy of notice, like the filings of gold which the artist preserves. They often illustrate great principles.

I. The deliverance which the king of Babylon accomplished for Jehoiachin.

1. *It is specially noticed,* as an act, no doubt, acceptable to God. God is the Father of mercies, and He loves exercises so like His own. Many events are unrecorded, but this has a conspicuous place. It throws a lovely light over the dark events of this chapter.

2. *It is every way complete.*

Nothing is left undone that could relieve his sad captivity. Released from prison; spoken kindly to; a seat of honour given him among other princes; his prison garments changed; he constantly is a guest at the king's table; a continual diet is given him; the kindness extends to the very close of life.

3. *It is worthy of practical imitation.*

"*Pure religion and undefiled,*" &c. (Isa. viii.) "*Inasmuch as ye did it unto me,*" &c. "*If thine enemy hunger,*" &c. "*Remember them in bonds.*" See Isa. lviii. 67.

II. The greater deliverance which Christ accomplishes. To rebels, to traitors.

1. *He emancipates us from the power of sin.*

Conversion is the opening of the prison. "To open their eyes," &c. "He is made of God to us redemption."

2. *He speaks in accents of kindness and compassion.* Margin reads, "*Good things with Him.*" "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to preach good tidings to the weak," &c.

3. *He clothes us with the robe of mercy.*

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord," &c. *Changed his prison garments* (Zech. iii. 3, 4).

4. *He feeds us with the bread of life.* "Man did eat angels' food." He thus nourishes us *freely, daily, constantly, to the very end.*

5. *He exalts us to the throne of immortality.*

On the career of Jechoniah, see *Personal Allusions*, p. 419, ver. 24, *Coniah, son of Jehoiachin;* also *Theme*, "*Woe to Coniah*," pp. 430, 431.

Notes—

"No one should despair in misfortune, for the right hand of the Highest can change all (Ps. lvii. 10), and Christ rules even in the midst of His enemies (Ps. cx. 2).—*Cramer.*

St. Jerome reports, from an ancient tradition of the Jews, that Evil-Merodach, having had the government of the Babylonish empire during the distraction of his father, used his power so ill, that as soon as the old king came to himself he put him in prison for it, *where he contracted a peculiar acquaintance with Jehoiachin*, his fellow-prisoner; and that this was the cause of the great kindness he expressed towards him. This elevation of the captive king was evidently an act of grace by Evil-Merodach on the occasion of his ascending the throne, 561 B.C.

Lange asks here: "May not the influence of Daniel and other highly esteemed Jews at the Babylonian court have operated in favour of the imprisoned king?"

Wordsworth reflects thus: "The change vouchsafed at Babylon by God's mercy even to Jehoiachin, after the terrible maledictions denounced against him (xxii. 24–30), and after a long exile of thirty-seven years, was like *a message of mercy and comfort* from God Himself, and was a *prelude and a pledge* of the *liberation and exaltation of the Jewish nation* when it had been humbled and purified by the discipline of suffering, and of its return to its own land. And it was like a *joyful free announcement* of that far more glorious *future restoration*, which the prophets in the Old and the apostles in the New Testament foretell — of *Israel to* GOD IN CHRIST."

Ver. 32. *Theme:* KIND WORDS. "*He spake kindly unto him.*"

After thirty-seven years of captivity, during which had passed away the youth and joyousness of King Jehoiachin, his prison doors were opened, his prison garments changed, and his throne exalted among the vanquished kings in Babylon; and yet we can well imagine that better far than the earthly distinction thus awarded him were the sunshine and comfort in his stricken heart when Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon, "spake kindly unto him."

"A little word in kindness spoken,
A motion, or a tear,
Hath often healed the heart that's broken,
And made a friend sincere.

"A word—a look—hath crushed to earth
Full many a budding flower,
Which, had a smile but owned its birth,
Would bless life's darkest hour.

"Then deem it not an idle thing
A pleasant word to speak;
The face you wear, the thought you bring,
A heart may heal or break."—*Whittier.*

I. Kindness should be a natural interchange between man and man.

The very word "kindness" comes from the cognate word *kinned*, *i.e.*, or of the *same kin or race*, acknowledging or reminding us of the fact that all men *are* brethren, all of the same blood, and therefore all should *act* as brethren. All who are of the same *kindred* should be *kind*. The same analogy is found in the word *humane*, from *human*.

"'Tis the first sanction Nature gave to man,
Each other to assist in what they can."
—*Denham.*

II. Small ministries of kindness may readily find occasion.

Life affords but few opportunities of doing great services for others, but there is scarcely an hour of the day that does not afford occasion of performing some little, it may be unnoticed, kindness.

"Scorn not the slightest word or deed,
Nor deem it void of power;
There's fruit in the wind-wafted seed,
Waiting its natal hour

"A whispered word may touch the heart,
And bring it back to life;
A look of love bid sin depart,
Or still unholy strife."

III. Kindly words effect more than pompous speech.

Loud talking, blustering pledges, os tentatious promises, are less agreeable to a man than honest though gentle words of affection, and win his heart less.

"Good words do more than hard speeches, as the sunbeams without any noise will make the traveller cast off his cloak, which all the blustering winds could not do, but only make him bind it the closer to him."—*Leighton.*

"You *can give me kind words* if you can do nothing else for me," said a poor woman to her district visitor, "and they make my heart glad. You cannot think how I look for the day of your coming, that I may tell you all my trials. Ah!" she added, "if only people thought a little about the trials and troubles of the poor, and the comfort and encouragement of a few kind words, they would not let them be so scarce."

IV. How touching the power of kind words on the suffering!

A compassionate visitor entered a prison hospital, and conversed with one of the most degraded and ignorant of men anywhere to be found. As he spoke kindly to him, the man drew the bed-clothes over his head and sobbed convulsively. As soon as he could speak he said to the visitor, "Sir, you are the first man that ever spoke a kind word to me since I was born, and I can't stand it."

"If a soul thou wouldst redeem,
And lead a lost one back to God,
Wouldst thou a guardian angel seem
To one who long in guilt hath trod?
Go kindly to him, take his hand,
With gentlest words within thine own
nd by his side a brother stand,
Till all the demons thou dethrone."
—*Mrs. Sawyer.*

Thus closes this plaintive Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, with a *gleam of light on the gloom of exile*, with a record of "mercy rejoicing against judgment," of kindness shown to a long-suffering captive, of God's pity for the degraded and dethroned king. So also may we in life's deepest and most prolonged sufferings find gracious alleviation; in our dethronisation — which sin has wrought—recover exaltation to spiritual honour and privilege; and in our earthly life of exile from the "land very far off," enjoy the favour of the glorious King, and be nourished with "a continued diet" of sacred grace "given us of the King, every day a portion until the day of our death." Amen.

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